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FLYING OSIP

Publisher's Note

(TO ORIGINAL EDITION)

The work of the young Russian writers whose art has been influenced by the Russian Revolution, and has found its fullest expression during that great upheaval, is as yet totally unknown in this country. This volume is an attempt to present the more characteristic productions of a representative group of these writers. The stories have been chosen by Alexander Chramoff who has written a critical introduction to the book.

Translated from the Russian by
L. S. Friedland *and*
J. R. Piroshnikoff

FLYING OSIP

Stories of New Russia

BY

Seifulina Shishkov Kasatkin
Kolosov Pilnyak Semenov
Ivanov Zozulya
Arosev

Short Story Index Reprint Series

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INTRODUCTION

During the first few years of the Bolshevist Revolution of November, 1917, the development of Russian literature was almost completely arrested. The majority of writers and poets who had distinguished themselves during the pre-Revolutionary period fell into bewildered silence. A few individuals among them accepted the Revolution, but they were not symptomatic of a general movement. The Futurists were the only literati fairly well represented among the writers embracing the November Revolution.

Russian literature grew up on ideas of democracy, but it interpreted this democracy in various ways. Some wanted the overthrow of Tsarism for the establishment of a bourgeois republic of the model of France or the United States; for others the Russian Revolution was to open the era of great victories for the Slavophile ideas; still others saw in it the beginning of a remolding of the world in a sort of spiritual fire —something like a "mystery" or a liturgy. But, while diverging in their views upon the aims and problems of the imminent Revolution, almost all currents of literary and social thought agreed unanimously on one point: that the Russian workers and peasants, having, with the assistance of the intelligentsia, thrown off the yoke of the Tsarist régime, would enthusiastically put themselves under the command of this intelligentsia and would move forward, guided by its wise counsels and admonitions.

The World War aroused in Russia, as well as in the rest of the world, a craze of patriotic fervor. Even the pro-Revolutionary elements of the intelligentsia advocated temporary conciliation with the Tsarist power in the name of victory over the Germans. Poets and prose writers dedicated their muse to the war, composed sycophantic odes about the soldier freezing and starving in the trenches, sang his bravery and military prowess—while their excited fancy drew the picture of Con-

stantinople secure in the possession of Russia. Few preferred to preserve "neutrality", and still fewer came out openly against the war, exposing its terrors and its inescapable consequences.

And in the meantime, interminable strings of dirty, unheated freight-cars stretched towards the fronts, carrying to slaughter the "cannon-fodder" mobilized at the villages and factories, and the dead-tired and starving soldiers composed verses not in the least resembling the stuff that the Balmonts, Bunins, Kuprins, Andreyevs, Hippiuses, and Merezhkovskys were writing in the quiet seclusion of their studies.

Here are two samples of soldiers' verses, taken from Fedorchenko's "People at War":

"The war began in someone else's sins—
But the muzhik has to bear it on his back;
He goes to the other world for another's fault;
With his soul he pays for someone else's sin."

And,

"Fly, fly, newspaper,
To the poor village fly,
And tell our near ones, newspaper,
How in this 'victorious' war we die;
So the home-folks may learn about our fate,
How their sons fare let them know—
Ah, our load of oppression is so great!
Let them win the soldiers freedom from this woe."

After the March Revolution, Russian literature was strangely silent. The writers and the poets, awed by the raging elements, retired deeply into themselves. They looked upon the people as upon an enraged beast. One of the best poets of pre-Revolutionary Russia, Balmont, when questioned as to the causes of the literary sterility of himself and his colleagues, made the following significant reply: "One does not create on a volcano."

And the Revolution kept unfolding itself. The liberal bourgeois intelligentsia was being shouldered further and further away from power. At last the November Revolution broke out. The masses of workers and peasants, led by Lenin and his party, took the power into their hands and established the rule of the Soviets.

To many prominent writers and poets, this period seemed

to signalize the coming of "King Mob". Embittered, devastated in soul, spiritually bankrupt, they retired within themselves, unable to understand what was taking place all about them.

Leonid Andreyev was especially bitter against the November Revolution. What a fervor of hatred for his former idol, the people, is apparent in his "Satan's Diary"—how much gall and malice in his judgment of the Bolsheviks!

A wave of emigration followed. One of the founders of Russian mysticism, Merezhkovsky, emigrated to Paris, as did Ivan Bunin, Zinaida Hippius, the impressionist poet Balmont, and others. For them the Russian Revolution was the realm of the rebellious slave, "a hundred and fifty million fools, and all of them lice-eaten, at that." Creative work among these writers became almost non-existent. In the course of the last few years they have not written a single remarkable novel, or a single inspired poem.

Some of the old writers have remained in Russia. Their attitude toward the Revolution is more conciliatory. The ideals of the social revolution are alien and incomprehensible to them. Still, they prefer to remain in their native land and to be direct witnesses of what is taking place there.

Maxim Gorky, Vyacheslav Ivanov, Boris Zaitsev, Zamyatin, Mandelstam, and others, did not desert Russia even during the terrible years of famine and privations. Many of them later went over to the side of the Revolution, and many others have remained "neutral" even to this very-day.

Side by side with the opponents of the November Revolution and with those who were neutral, Russian literature produced also those who, from the very first moment of the Revolution, joined the people and did not forsake it in the most trying times. Among these was the founder and leader of Russian symbolism, Valeri Briusov, who died recently; such was the chronicler of village life, Serafimovich; such was Veresaev, author of the celebrated "Memoirs of a Physician", and the poets Blok, Gorodetsky, Bely, and the overwhelming majority of the Futurists.

Alexander Blok was particularly keen in his response to the Revolution. His muse reflected the November events in one of

the most truly artistic works of Russian literature, "The Twelve".

"The Twelve" is a poem glorifying the Proletarian Revolution. It is a hymn to the people in rebellion; it is a curse hurled at the old world, and a scathing ridicule of its defenders. For Alexander Blok the twelve Red soldiers—who are fanning the world-fire "to the woe of all *bourzhuis*"—are the symbol of world revolution. The end of the poem is forceful and replete with symbolism. The Red soldiers, who slay and destroy as they go forward, are led and blessed by Jesus Christ himself, who emerges from the snow drifts with a red flag in his hands. The Russian critic, Gorbachev, is unquestionably right in maintaining that "this poem was for Blok the supreme sanction of the November Revolution, its anointment as the spiritual Revolution."

A word of explanation is needed here. Alexander Blok, Briusov, Bely, and many other writers who earned literary fame in the pre-Revolutionary period, viewed the November Revolution in its political rather than its social aspect. They differed and still differ from the "proletarian writers" and from the "sympathizers" of the later period, by their conservatism of form, as well as by their deep-rooted "intellectualist" individualism and their rejection of creative work based on collectivism and inspired by it. For Blok and for others, the Marxian ideology and philosophy appeared, and continue to appear, alien. They saw in the Russian Revolution not a proletarian revolution but the beginnings of the "cosmic" revolution, the end of philistine existence, the reshaping of the world along the lines of mysticism. No wonder, therefore, that these writers watched the shattering and the remolding of the country without actively participating in these movements; they philosophized about chaos and gave it their blessing from the quiet seclusion of their studies.

Among the old writers who assimilated the November Revolution through the heart, and made it an organic part of themselves, Vladimir Mayakovsky and Demyan Bedny are especially prominent. From the very beginning of the Revolution they were members of the Communist Party. Besides, Demyan

Bedny is practically the only prominent writer to receive the Order of the Red Flag for his services to the Revolution.

At the time when Kolchak, having occupied the Volga region and Central Russia, was advancing upon Moscow, when Denikin was approaching the "Red Smithy"—Tula—and Yudenich was attacking the suburbs of Petrograd, Demyan Bedny was flooding the front, the factory, and the villages, with his keen satires and revolutionary poems. Bedny's muse was comprehensible to all. His sharp, critical pen hit upon the social problems that interested the factory and the village; it exposed the class alignment of the counter-revolutionary forces; it touched upon everything that occupied the minds of the masses. He was equally witty and brilliant in his ridicule of the priests, the generals, the forlorn intelligentsia, the reformist socialist, and the Allies. His inscriptions on posters, his fables, verses, and current apothegms, were popular not only among the Red Army but also among the White troops. Every production of Demyan Bedny's pen, in addition to its pronounced literary qualities, was an excellent propaganda means in the hands of the Revolution, and a truthful reflection of the strivings of the masses of workers and peasants.

Vladimir Mayakovsky, one of the founders of the futurist school in Russia, gave the Revolution a series of remarkable and colorful creations permeated with revolutionary pathos, and based on the idea of the glorification of collectivism.

Leon Trotsky, in his book, "Literature and Revolution", pointed out that in the realm of fine literature the Russian intelligentsia worthily responded to the Revolution only with Blok's "The Twelve", and with some poems by Mayakovsky—("War and Peace", "Mystery-Bouffe", "150,000,000", and some of his revolutionary poems). Vladimir Mayakovsky was one of the few Russian writers who, in 1914, took a sharply anti-militarist position. In his very first poem, "War Is Declared", Mayakovsky's voice sounded a discord in the concerted chorus of the patriotic writers and poets.

Among the Russian prose writers who later came over to the

side of the November Revolution, Ilya Ehrenburg and Alexei Tolstoi have gained prominence in recent times. Both these writers reflect in literature the ideas of a political trend among the émigrés—a trend known under the name of *smiena-vekh.**

Alexei Tolstoi responded to the Revolution with an excellent novel, "The Road to Calvary", and a novel of *smiena-vekh* trend—"Aelita".

Ilya Ehrenburg became extremely popular in Russia through his novels, "Julio Jurenito", and "The Tale of Nikolai Kurbov".

As regards both Ehrenburg and Tolsoi, these works are the result of the refraction of their political and social ideals through the vast prism of the Russian Revolution. But while "Aelita" and "The Road to Calvary" are preëminently works of literature, "Julio Jurenito" and "The Tale of Nikolai Kurbov" are little more than brilliant satires upon modern bourgeois society, and in their form and structure approach the best models of artistic journalism.

There are now in Russia about two hundred government and private publishing concerns. At Moscow, Leningrad, and in the provinces, innumerable almanacs and collections of stories and poems are being published; Soviet periodical literature includes several substantial magazines. Journalistic needs are met by *Press and Revolution,* the *Red Chronicle, Under the Banner of Marxism, Book and Revolution,* etc. Artistic achievements find their expression in *Red News,* the *Young Guard,* the *Star,* the *Lights of Siberia,* in the volumes of prose and poetry published at intervals by the "Krug" Publishing Company, and in the illustrated weeklies, the *Projector,* and the *Red Niva.*

A new literature was born in the course of the seven years of the existence of Soviet Russia. The younger generation of talent, tempered in the forge of Revolution, came forward to take the place of the "old" writers. Their chief theme is the study and interpretation of the new mode of life. This is the

* Literally, "those who are in favor of changing the landmarks," *i.e.,* who are ready to alter their former policy of combating the Soviets, to a policy of coöperation.

outstanding theme of Boris Pilnyak, Mikhail Zoshchenko, N. Nikitin, Efim Zozulya, N. Nikandrov, Semen Semenov, and others.

The life of the muzhik, his emotions and experiences in the civil war, find their reflection in the best works of Vsevelod Ivanov, Lydia Seifulina, Vyacheslav Shishkov, Podyachev, Neverov, and, in some measure, in Alexander Yakovlev.

The inner life of the Communist Party is interpreted by Alexander Arosev, Alexeev, Yuri Lebedinsky, Rodionov-Tarasov.

The new factory life is taken up by the literary associations: "The Forge", the Ivano-Vosnesensk group, "Cosmist", and by all the proletarian writers.

The life of the Red Army is pictured by Budantsev, Malyshkin, Babel.

General themes are handled by Lidin, Zamyatin, Olga Forsh, Prishvin.

Among the hundreds of poets, Bezimensky, Gastev, Yessenin, Tikhonov, Gerasimov, are particularly colorful.

Not all of them share the political doctrines of the Bolsheviks. Not all of them are convinced that Russia is destined to progress along the lines of Communism.

One of the prominent writers of modern Russia, Boris Pilnyak, welcomes the November Revolution and the Bolsheviks because, in his opinion, they turned Russia away from Western Europe back to the path it had followed before Peter the Great. "I, a non-Bolshevik, generally prefer to keep company with the Bolsheviks: they have buoyancy and hopefulness," declares Pilnyak through one of the characters in his novel.

Others among the new writers see in the Bolsheviks the bearers of the national ideal. Still others regard the Revolution as one of the periodic earthquakes of culture, similar to the downfall of earlier cultures. Others, again, believe that the dawn of the liberation of humanity from the yoke of the capitalist system has come in the East of Europe. But with all the differences in their political and philosophical attitude towards modern Russia, they are unanimous in their contempt for the old intelligentsia who emigrated abroad, and they resolutely turn

away from the White Guard adventurers and from their inspirers.

The new writers differ from the old in an almost complete absence of psychologism. Minute psychologic analysis, à la Dostoyevsky or à la Andreyev—that which particularly distinguished Russian literature from other literatures—is utterly alien to the creative genius and philosophy of the new writers. War has been declared on psychologism. The horrors which signalized the first part of the Revolution, these authors describe in a simple, primitive way—just in passing, as it were. The striving for the cinematographic rendering of events, with no elaboration of deep, psychologic analysis, is the problem taken up by the "Serapion Fraternity"—one of the most influential groups in modern Russian literature.

The language of the young writers differs from the language of the "old" by its brevity, categorical form, abundance of imagery, and its concentration of color. The modern prose writers and poets seek new means of expression; they cast their creative efforts into the caldron of most complicated experimentation, and at times they are even difficult to understand because of this search for new forms. The overwhelming majority of them lived, body and soul, through the Russian Revolution. They were direct actors in it, they walked on the precipice of death, and escaped only through a miracle.

Here is the weird story of the writer A. Yakovlev:

"March, 1917—then November and Golgotha. The entire winter of 1918-19 I lived without undressing—in boots, hat, and coat. Arms and legs swollen from hunger. The two human beings nearest to me died. Acute loneliness came. And then the constant memories of my past: how we (I also) had been promised a chicken in our soup and were served, instead, our own child boiled in the soup. . . . Years of despair. Where shall one turn? What is one to do? Either insanity or death—or perhaps to take oneself in hand and lead oneself away from everything? Literature came to the rescue: I began to write. Seriously, this time. In summer (every summer) I set out on a walking trip through the country, observing. I had seen Russia downtrodden—now I see it rising. She rises

from the baptism of fire, she lives through terrible years, she is going through a rebirth, is becoming great, united. . . ."

The autobiography of Vsevolod Ivanov reads like a fairy tale. He was born in Siberia, his father being a worker in the gold mines there. Later, entirely by means of self-education, he passed the examination entitling him to the certificate of a rural teacher.

"I started my wanderings at the age of fourteen," Vsevolod Ivanov writes about himself. "In the course of seven years I was a compositor, sailor, clown, 'Dervish Ben-Ali-Bey'—(I swallowed swords, stuck pins into my flesh, jumped over knives and blazing torches, performed a host of tricks); I walked the streets of Tomsk as an organ-grinder; performed as a tent-show actor at fairs. Acted in the capacity of verse-reciter at circuses, and even of wrestler.

"Starting in 1917, I took part in the Revolution. After the Czechoslovaks took Omsk (I was in the Red Guard at the time), when most of my comrades were shot or hanged, I escaped to the famine regions, and after my father's death, traveled on, beyond Semipalatinsk, toward Mongolia. The Whites were eagerly after me, for I had been active in various Communist plots. Thus I kept wandering between the Urals and Chita, during the entire period of Kolchak's hegemony."

Twice Vsevolod Ivanov was on the verge of being shot: once by Red guerilla fighters, and on another occasion by the Cheka of Novonikolaevsk, owing to a misunderstanding. In addition to all this he went through a serve attack of spotted typhus.

Such are the biographies of two of the new Russian writers, who, it should be noted, are not members of the Communist Party. The Communist writers: Arosev, Lebedinsky, Malishkin, Semenov, and others, lived with even greater fervor through the Revolution. They fought in the ranks of the Red Army, languished in captivity, suffered the cruel torments of hunger, privations, and confinement in White prisons. No wonder, therefore, that in subject matter, most of the works of the new Russian writers differ from pre-Revolutionary literature. In the course of the seven years of the Revolution the country underwent a sea-change. The Russia of churches, noblemen's

nests, cozy cherry orchards, of the dear, idealistic, but flabby intelligentsia, is gone forever. Revolutionary Russia has come to take its place—a Russia that is all activity, striving, dynamics. The Russia of workers and peasants. The Russia that has shaken off its long sleep and is feverishly building the new life on the bases of proletarian culture and civilization.

This is why the new literature has not as yet produced any huge works—novels embracing and interpreting entire epochs. The young authors write novels and stories devoted to separate elements of the Revolution, its life and its history. "Tolstois of the Revolution" have not made their appearance, as yet. The balanced artistic contemplation, the minute analysis of the emotions of the human soul, the introspection and objectivism, are beyond the reach of most of them. The hearts and minds of the modern Russian writers have been shaken by tremendous events. They had to write, not in the calm seclusion of their studies, but piecemeal, in the intervals between civic duties. The new literature does not drift into pessimism. And of mysticism there is not a trace. They do not lament over what has been destroyed. They work toward self-improvement, they observe reality, they watch attentively the mood of the masses, and they do not moan and weep for the "good old times", like some of the émigré writers. Bravely they gaze forward, and see before them a great and happy Russia of workers and peasants.

The present writer holds that few can be expected to know and feel Russia so thoroughly as do the Russian authors who participated in the November Revolution and who were its direct eye-witnesses. The chief object of this book, accordingly, is to acquaint the Western reader with the life of New Russia through the works of the best native writers now resident in Russia.

The task of compiling this collection of stories was beset with great difficulties. The style of the new Russian writers is novel and colorful. They bring with them a great many colloquialisms, popular words, and pointed sayings—the coinage of the last few years. Their prose often borders on poetry, and it abounds in imagery. The style of many of these authors is not yet crystallized; it is still in the process of formation. The

language of Pilnyak, Vsevolod Ivanov, Lydia Seifulina, Malishkin, Budantsev, makes the translator's task extremely difficult. In selecting the stories it was, therefore, necessary to be guided not only by the merits of their subject matter, and their interest for the Western reader, but also by their adaptability to translation.

The longest story in the book is Semenov's "Hunger". In his "Essays on Modern Russian Literature", the Russian critic, Gorbachev, refers to the furore that this tale aroused in literary circles. He says:

"This tale was deservedly translated into several foreign languages, and was repeatedly reprinted in Russia. Possessed of great talent as a realist, and of a profound knowledge of the life of the rank and file among the workers and government employees during the epoch of military communism, Semenov gave an uncannily truthful picture of the terrible months of famine endured by the masses in revolutionary Petrograd, the starvation which led to sickness, death, degeneration, moral and mental deterioration, but which, nevertheless, was unable to keep the sounder elements among the workers—particularly the youth—from remaining faithful in the defense of the Revolution and from struggling on until better times came. This work is unquestionably new, vivid, highly interesting and instructive to non-Russians and to all who were far away from the starving masses of Petrograd."

The young woman writer, Lydia Seifulina, is represented in this book by one of her best works, "The Lawbreakers". Seifulina was born in Siberia. She began her literary career in 1920 with contributions to the literary almanac, *Lights of Siberia*. The material for her novels and stories is drawn principally from Siberian life in villages and little towns. Seifulina's pen produced two long tales that attracted the attention of literary Russia: "Decay", a remarkable representation of a revolutionary Siberian village, and "Virineya", in which the author gives a strong and vivid portrait of a woman whom the Revolution awakened from a state of spiritual apathy, and who became a capable organizer and leader in the affairs of her village.

Alexander Kolosov's story, "Thirteen", takes up the subject

of present-day Russian children, their upbringing and mode of life. Kolosov is a young and very promising writer. His "Thirteen" is a truthful and vivid characterization of the new generation growing up in the period of the Revolution, and preparing to take the place of the weary, moribund, "past" Russia.

The life of the present-day Russian village and its cultural revival as the result of the November Revolution, find their reflection in the merry, delightful story by Vyacheslav Shishkov, "A Theatrical Performance in the Hamlet of Ogryzovo".

On the other hand, town-life of the first turbulent years of revolution, is the theme of the story, "A Mere Trifle", by Efim Zozulya—a story of tense action and dynamic power. "A Mere Trifle" gives a remarkably live picture of the actual course of the Proletarian Revolution in Russia. This story brings into strong relief the Bolsheviks, who succeeded in gaining control over the elemental forces of the Revolution and who directed them along an organized path.

In his story, "Flying Osip", Alexander Kasatkin gives a portrayal of a Red Army soldier, a man whose family was slain by the White Guards and who yearns for vengeance and seeks death in vain in the front ranks of battle.

Arosev's sketches, "Recent Days", are permeated with the feeling of the unlimited devotion of the Communists to the Revolution, and with their love for its great leader, Lenin.

The most prominent writers of modern Russia, Boris Pilnyak and Vsevolod Ivanov, are represented by integral selections from their novels. The peculiarities of their literary style, presenting almost insurmountable difficulties to the translators, make it impossible to introduce more fully to non-Russian readers the creative work of these two authors. The aim in the choice of these stories has been to show the Russia of the first years of the Revolution and the Russia of today, in its reality; to give to the reader those things which travelers and journalists were not in a position to give him: the life, the soul, the dynamic sweep, of New Russia.

ALEXANDER CHRAMOFF.

New York, January, 1925.

FLYING OSIP

FLYING OSIP

I

ONE EVENING IN MAY, HAVING ARRANGED FOR our wounded at the depot, we established ourselves on a meadow, waiting for *kasha,* when suddenly, from the direction of the forest, he appeared —Flying Osip!

"Brothers, it's Osip!" rolled over the meadow— "Flying Osip!"

"Where? Where?" The newcomers among the guerilla-fighters turned their heads eagerly. "What Osip?"

"Open your eyes, not your mouths! There!"

"And really, it's him!" cried one of the old-timers; he jumped up, stuck his spoon in back of his boot-leg and yelled:

"It's him! Osip! The flying devil! . . ."

"I tell you, it's him."

"Still alive! True chip of the Urals!"

"Well, brothers, if Osip's turned up there'll be something doing!"

"You don't catch Osip coming for nothing!"

"I tell you, if he's turned up! . . ."

A tall man, clad in a muzhik's coat, was approaching along the embankment, swerving aside from the piles of torn-up ties and rails of the demolished road. The skirts of his coat were stuck like wedges behind his belt, and his dingy, rust-colored cap with the visor was thrust forward on his head. One could see by his worn-out, bast shoes that the man had walked many a mile.

Coming up close to us, he slowly took off his cap,

bowed to either side, and a weary smile flitted across his pock-marked face.

He asked hoarsely:

"Ours?"

"Whose then? You rum guy!"

"Osip, don't you know us?"

"We spotted you way, way off!"

The man again smiled wearily, with a simple-hearted smile. He passed his dark palm over his face as if brushing off cobwebs, and unexpectedly asked in a firm voice, in military fashion:

"What detachment? Whose?"

Eagerly, interrupting one another, we named our detachment, explained our position and the disposition of the enemy forces.

And the fellow with the spoon in his boot-leg, pressing forward until his nose almost touched the other's, yelled as if across a field:

"Osip, lad! Have you forgotten? Didn't you lead us in the flanking movement at Sabanov! And we struck the enemy in the rear so that . . . Gee! . . ."

"Smashed 'em to smithereens!"

Leaning wearily against a wagon, and twisting his matted beard around his finger, Osip shook his head, as if wishing to say: "I don't remember, somehow."

"At Sabanov. . . . Wait. . . ." He began to rub his nose on the outside, where the nostril was torn away. "Isn't Sokolov in your detachment? Kirsan's his given name?"

"There, you know us all right!" eagerly cried the one with the spoon in his boot-leg. "Where else should Kirsan be! Sure he's with us!"

"Sokolov's with us!" the men shouted from all sides, surrounding Osip. "Sokolov's here! Only, as

it happens, he's wounded. Last night. Badly! He's at the depot, is Sokolov!"

Just then the wagons with the large caldrons of *kasha* came up. Pans began to rattle. The boys rushed to the caldrons, and the cooks, swinging their ladles, shouted:

"Get in line, get in line! Look sharp, or you'll get scalded!"

Osip twisted his beard around his finger and started toward the depot. He refused even the hot *kasha.*

"He's off to wake up the old wounds," said one of the old-timers, carefully holding his palm under the spoon that was on its way to his mouth.

"Sokolov, boys, was an eye-witness when Osip's family was completely wiped out. The Whites did the job. That's why he remembers Sokolov. No wonder! They were neighbors. . . ."

"Sokolov will die," said a callow youth, blowing on the steaming *kasha,* his eyes bulging out. He stuffed the *kasha* from the spoon into his mouth, burning his tongue, and added, "A bullet hit his lung, khlear through his back."

"Look out; you'll choke, you 'khlear through'," mimicked a neighbor. "Swallow it first. . . ."

Osip soon came out of the depot.

Sokolov was unconscious. The ride in the wagon had shaken him up. The nurse who was there on duty asked them not to disturb him.

Osip sat down on a tie and lowered his head as if meaning to doze off. They gave him a pan of *kasha.* A few of them tried to address questions to him. But pushing the *kasha* aside, he suddenly arose, as if he had all at once recollected something.

"I have to go to headquarters. Where's headquarters?"

"Eat some *kasha* first! What a fellow! . . ."

"I can't! Matter of business," Osip grumbled in his beard.

And one could see that he was hungry. While we were putting the hand-car on the track to bring him to headquarters, he greedily swallowed a few handfuls of *kasha,* scooping it up with his fingers.

On the platform of the hand-car—we had barely started—Osip fell asleep, his head lowered between his knees.

II

Meanwhile it grew dark. Stars appeared. June-beetles buzzed like bullets over our camp. The men stretched themselves out on the meadow. Here and there little, golden gleams of cigarettes flared up.

In the forest a bittern was booming, as if into a barrel.

"Yes, there are all kinds of men. . . ." sighed a Uralian, Babushkin, who came from Sokolov's district. "It's a year and a half now that Osip's been looking for death. . . . But she won't take him! He dashes from front to front, throws himself forward, straight into the fire . . . she won't take him! Did you notice the mark—the torn nostril? That was when the Whites caught him once, right in their headquarters nearly. They buried him up to his neck in the ground for a whole day. . . . And they stuck a rusty nail in his nostril, and just like that . . . ripped it out with the flesh."

"You say he's looking for death," interrupted one of the youngsters, "and what the devil does he want death for? You've got things twisted, uncle."

Babushkin kept silent for a while, gazing at the crescent that was entangled in the tree-tops.

"Sometimes even death is sweet," he said after the pause. "Only, it's hard for some men to find it. Just for spite, death won't take one who doesn't fear it. And he who tries to hide from it,—you turn round, and there he is, lying under a bush, his eyes staring upward, poor soul. . . ."

"Say, uncle, just tell us straight. . . . About Osip! Why is he called 'Flying'?"

"Well, that's what I'm telling you; he flies from front to front, looking for death, and she runs from him. . . . Understand? That's the kind of a man he is: he goes plump in the midst of the enemy, finds out everything, sniffs out all their plans. And when it comes to battle, he's the first everywhere, in front of all, like a wild beast. . . . And when resting—you see how it is—we laugh and make merry, but he, Osip, is blue. . . . He sits somewhere in a corner alone, and you can see that he's sad. And when he's sad, then he likes most of all to play the guitar. Of course, he don't know how to play—he just picks at the strings. He lowers his head all the way down and just keeps strummin' quietly. Then you'd better not bother him. Once I sat next to him—I look—tears are rolling from his eyes. . . . Hey, seems to me you're snoring!"

"N-n-no . . . only . . . those who are tired. . . ."

"You just keep on telling the story. Semakov, Mitka, give me a pinch of 'backie. Ah, he's asleep—the devil!"

"And it's really time to sleep," Babushkin yawned lazily. "And Osip, I tell you, is a man of gold. A smart one. He's a teacher; one of the village teachers. When the Whites showed up around here, he, you must know,—he raised the whole Ural district against them. And when ours retreated, the others went wild—uh! And they started to slash, you may say,—even the

babes. . . . Workmen perished by thousands. They used to put out their eyes, drive nails into their brains. When they caught any of 'em in the woods they would hang 'em right there on the trees. That was when they found out what kind of a bird Baev was . . . Osip's name is Baev . . . so right off they wiped out his whole family, that is, the wife and the little ones. When Sokolov starts to tell about it, your hair stands on end. . . . "

Babushkin pressed down the tobacco in his pipe with his finger-nail, and struck a match. The feeble light flared up and for a moment illumined the darkness around. The boys were sleeping in every possible position. Only Vasyaga Grach, the youngest, resting his face on his palms, looked with wide-open eyes straight at Babushkin's beard.

"Say, uncle," Vasyaga said in a low and pensive voice, "that Osip is sort of strange. . . . He's terrible. . . . He twitches his torn nostril and his eyebrow . . . and he seems to grin . . . I've noticed it. He's like a demon. He's ferocious!"

"What?—he!—ferocious! . . . He's like a babe, Osip is. He's got the soul of a saint, lad. You couldn't find a kindlier man. Of course, he's pining . . . that's about his family. He would like to die, but even death respects the brave. But you're right. He is like a demon. Or like a wild cat that lives in the woods. And just watch—he'll spill a lot of blood yet . . . of those . . ."

And Babushkin fell to snoring. Vasyaga stretched out at full length, put his hands under his head, and gazed and gazed at the crescent that had already risen high.

In the forest a bittern boomed intermittently. Over

the meadow, over the sleeping men, mosquitoes droned piteously; June-beetles hummed. . . .

III

The housewives of the village where we stopped had not slept, it seemed, all night; in the morning they brought us a mound of stuff cooked, fried, and what not. . . .

For us this is a holiday after the wilderness of marches and fighting. We walk like heroes through the village. Girls and women peep out of the windows and gates, and invite us with smiles and waving hands for a treat.

"Come in; try some of our eats!"

"Ah, it's hunger and tired limbs you've had!"

"The samovar is on the table. . . . Step in!"

And toward noon neighboring muzhiks arrived with carloads of all kinds of supplies. Hundreds of people gathered—old and young, women and children. They surrounded us in crowds. "Some lads, those Uralians!" We can see at once that their hearts are with us and not with the enemy.

We look at them, and then, smiling from ear to ear, husky lads come over to us and ask:

"Where can we step in here?"

Volunteers, you understand, sons of ——. I don't know where they come from, but each carries a new rifle on his shoulder; they're oiled, in fact, and just shine. Some, we notice, show a red ribbon on the bayonet. . . .

Ah, blast their hides! Noise, commotion, laughter. . . .

"Look, boys, look at the old fellow!"

"Hey, pop—you going to the war?"

"Well . . . I've sharp eyes, mother!"

"Hey, girls, stand aside, we'll tear your sarafans!"

We look up and we see four brave lads rolling out a machine-gun. A pug-nosed fellow wipes the sweat off his face with his hat and says:

"Show us where to stick in this spouter!"

"Come on, right here!"

"Oho-ho-ooo!"

"Some brute!"

"Never mind, he'll sneeze it out on our hills."

"He'll cackle, all right!"

"He's had a long rest under the straw in a barn!"

"He! he! . . . Now look out, kondra-revolution!"

And in the evening Osip came from staff-headquarters with the news: "Get ready for the offensive quietly; we start in a day or two."

Well, that's all right—a scrimmage is nothing new to us.

And Osip, you know, mounted on a bay gelding, in a leather coat and boots, and at his side a long, long revolver. But the dingy, rust-colored cap remained unchanged, its crown completely flattened in.

The repair-brigade, on hand-cars loaded with implements, rushed off somewhere. Our Osip is a real hero, turns up here and there like an ace, gives orders and all that. . . . Quite a different man from yesterday's Osip!

Night fell, but few of us cared to turn in to sleep. The young folks scattered among the nooks here and there. In the houses—lights, feasting, chatter, this and that. . . .

The crescent-moon was already high, and the bittern boomed again in the forest; the nightingales, too, were not letting their chance go by. And we—some behind the hedge, some at the gate, and some just in the corner

—cooing with the girls, in pairs. Ah, what great girls they are!

And there, on the meadow, a three-decker accordion was going strong, and our boys stamping away, now the *komarinski,* now the *barynya.*

IV

And all that time, at the depot, leaning over the fatally wounded who were lying on the floor, Flying Osip implored, hissing like a goose:

"Sokolov, friend . . . I see you're about to die. . . . Tell me for the last time, about mine. . . ."

The crescent-moon was gazing into the bullet-drilled window with a greenish, smoky light, throwing on the floor the shadow of the window-frame. The wounded moaned and raved in many voices.

Sokolov was silent under his coat. In his throat, or somewhere inside, something was rattling and gurgling. His face appeared dead and green by the light of the moon. . . .

"Sokolov . . . friend. . . ."

"Don't torture yourself," gasped Sokolov.

"I need it . . . do you hear? . . . I need it!"

Osip, bending down until he was on all fours, leaned still lower over Sokolov and began to tell him in a hot, penetrating whisper how he had just been in the enemy's rear, in the very capital of the Ural, had found out, sniffed out everything, so as to strike them squarely on the head. . . .

"And from there, not sparing my head, I made my way to Isetsky, to the site of my ruined home. It was night. . . . I crawled over to my house. I looked through the window. . . . Empty, quiet. . . . And it hurt so. I almost screamed with pain. I kissed the window, do you understand, kissed the porch . . . and

the ground near the porch where the villains . . . A-a-ah!"

Osip grabbed his head, swung it to and fro, became silent for a moment, moaning as if with the toothache, and again said to Sokolov:

"Friend, for the last time. . . . How did it happen? Don't spare me. Tell me everything, everything! . . ."

And Sokolov, with rattling gasps and long pauses, began to tell how the Whites had burst into the village, how they found out through various tale-bearers that Osip was the head man in everything in the district, and how they broke into his house.

"I did not see, I don't know what happened in the house. Only, they dragged your wife, that is, Natasha, out on the porch. I see she is all in tatters, breasts bare. . . . The little one is in her arms and Vasyatka clings to her skirt, bawling all the way down the street. . . . The little officer happened to be a quick-tempered fellow, he complains that the brats interfere with his questioning this bitch. . . . He turns to a soldier and shouts: 'Stick 'em both on a bayonet!' The soldier started back, wouldn't do it. I see him now before my eyes: a red-haired fellow, and his eyes go blink, blink. . . . The officer struck him one, landing square on his freckled face. . . . He grabbed the little chap and banged him against the fence, like a fish. . . . And the soldier, as if in fright, stuck Vasyatka with a bayonet, so to say. . . . Then your wife, Natasha, began to scream in a horrible voice, and like a vulture she jumped at the officer, grabbed him by the throat . . . with her hands and teeth . . . O-o-oh!"

Sokolov choked. He tries to catch his breath and something boils and rattles in his chest. . . . Osip still bends over him, his head lowered stiffly, and he

trembles with a rapid shuddering, a sudden twitching, and his clenched hands rest on the floor.

And Sokolov continued:

"He, the son of a ——, grabs Natasha by the hair with one hand . . . and the other hand, I see, reaches for the revolver. Vasyatka is struggling at his feet; he keeps pulling at his trouser leg and he's all blue from the strain. . . . The officer shoots downward under his feet. Vasyatka fell in a lump and rolled down the steps, his little hand stretched out, his shirt turning up. . . . Even the soldiers turned away. . . ."

Sokolov held his breath for a long time, and grabbed the blanket with his fingers, as if listening to something within himself.

"In his rage, he wanted to shoot her; it would have been much better. But then . . . the devil brought two more. . . . Blue uniforms with gold lining, braid on their breasts. One had glasses, or again, he didn't have 'em, so to say; he had a glass in one eye. . . . They grabbed Natasha, put her with her face down. . . . Then the two sat on her, tore her clothes off, and began to flog her with the *nagaika*. . . . But she broke loose, I don't know how. . . . And then she struck the one that had a glass in his eye straight in the mug. . . . He got wild. . . . He yells to the soldiers in a shrill voice. 'Sharpen a stake, you sons of ——!' And himself he grabs a birch-stake that was by the wood-pile near the fence. . . . 'Point it,' he yells, 'good and sharp!' "

Sokolov, obviously excited, began to swallow air greedily, like a fish thrown on the sand. His eyes filled with tears and glistened sharply in the moonlight that fell through the window upon the floor.

"And then . . . the sons of —— dug the stake into the ground with the point up. . . . They tore off

Natasha's clothes to the last rag. . . . And stuck her naked, alive, on the stake. . . . Do you understand? They put Vasyatka and the little one at her feet. . . . And she stayed there for two days on the stake, horrible, blue. . . . They wouldn't let her be taken down. People burst into tears at the sight of her. . . ."

Sokolov turned away. With hooked fingers he grabbed the edge of the pillow, and an ominous wheezing came from his chest due to the burning pain of the disturbed wound between the shoulder-blades. . . .

Osip was sitting on the floor, with his head lifted up, like a huge, shaggy dog ready to howl. . . . He looked wild and terrible in the moonlight. He was trembling with a rapid shuddering, like a dog,—his beard shook, and his teeth showing through his beard, chattered with swift tremors, clenched, and chattered again. . . . His eyebrows twitched in strange bewilderment, in unbearable sorrow.

V

Overnight the line was put to rights. The test locomotive woke us up with its merry hooting. We look and see that an armored-train, a "beetle," as we call it, was there too. Well, we started forward, Osip with our detachment, and at the very head.

The staff kept turning to him all the time.

Well, what is there to tell? Of course, we cannot even understand how and what. . . . But it seems there were no preliminary attacks. It seems that we cut into the very center of the Whites. It was nighttime. Again—that's more than we, just rank and file, can understand—but toward noon we had finished the job and were snoozing in a camp.

And our Flying Osip was attending to the captives.

He was very strong on sparing captive soldiers. He would say a word or two to them and tell them to think it over. Well, and the lads straight off beg to shoulder rifles; they become ours.

But with their officers he had his own way. Don't you dare kill an officer, but by all means bring him to Osip. And he takes his long, long revolver, and—square on the bridge of the nose—bang! And walks off without turning back. Only, his eyebrow trembles a bit and his torn nostril twitches. . . . And sometimes he would drag through his teeth:

"D-d-dog!"

And he had another way with him: when we came to rest in a little town or a village, then, you could be migh y sure of it, he wants a guitar. We—you know, —some go after the girls, and some hang around the eats—but for him—give him a guitar. Once, fools that we were, we gave him a balalaika. He silently pushed it aside—no good.

He would sit down somewhere, on the porch or on the logs, and, pulling his dingy old cap low down over his eyes, would begin to pinch the strings: *trin-tren, tren-dren. . . .*

He would forget himself, let his hand drop, and his head would sink lower and lower on the guitar. . . .

And at such times, though it sounds strange—we were afraid of him. We were afraid, and we were sorry for him to death. Just think—what a terrible, inhuman load hangs over his head, if one rightly understands.

A THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE IN THE HAMLET OF OGRYZOVO

THE BRUNT OF THE WAR IS OVER, AND THE RED-Army private, Pavel Mokhov, is back again in his native hamlet, Ogryzovo.

It was spring-time, everything was green and blossoming; the larks trilled all day long in the sky, and at night the nightingales sang. The field-manuring was finished, and it was still a long time to the haying season. The peasants were resting; the sun-holidays were being celebrated—St. Nicholas', Trinity, All Saints' Day—with masses, with tolling of bells, religious processions, unrestrained debauchery, and smashing of faces.

"The devils! They live like a most backward nationality," thought Pavel Mokhov indignantly. "If one takes a bird's-eye view of them, they haven't even been touched by the Revolution. It's a disgrace!"

And without further ado he organized a theatrical circle.

The people could not understand what this was, and very few enrolled as members. But when the deacon, out of mischief, spread a rumor that everyone who enrolled would receive a herring, then the whole village crowded to the circle, even the aged, doddering men and women.

The president, Pavel Mokhov, laughed at this, and asked the bow-legged granny, Sekletinya:

"Very well, grandmother, I will register you. Here is a part for you—you are to play the young sweetheart. Can you do it?"

"Play it yourself, you fat-faced fool," snuffled the

old woman, limping on her crooked leg, "give me the herrings that are due by the law. Three of 'em."

Generally speaking, there was at first a great deal of confusion in the circle. But later things straightened out. Within a week a merry farce was performed at the school, the peasants roared with laughter and asked for more plays, promising to pay with eggs, milk, and cream.

As for himself, Pavel Mokhov was utterly unfit for the stage—he lost his head, trembled, mumbled nonsense—but he loved the theater passionately. That is why, in the plays put on by the soldiers, he used to be intrusted with the firing of a gun behind the stage. And he would always fire it off just at the right moment. Here, too, he limited himself to this at first glance insignificant, but nevertheless responsible part.

But now a problem arose: there were no plays. They wrote to the county-seat. A copy of "Julius Cæsar" was sent them. When they counted the characters, there were fully forty of them; almost every one in the hamlet would have to take part—who, then, would look on?

Then Pavel Mokhov and another Red-Army soldier, Stepochkin, decided to concoct a play of their own. "It's not so hard. It's a snap." They invited the newly fledged teacher, Mitri Mitrich, a former tailor of church-vestments, to help them.

After dinner the trio proceeded to the smoky bathhouse and locked themselves in, so as not to be disturbed. They took along a quart of home brew. By the next morning the play was finished. It was really Mokhov who wrote it; the two others just stood by. All three, worn out as if after a long illness, emerged into the fresh air and, reeling, shuffled home in great joy. Their faces were smudged with soot.

"Loving mother," Pavel addressed his mother in real gentlemanly style, "treat the author to tea. I am now an author; I have written a strongly effective tragedy entitled: 'A Blow to the Proletarian Revolution, or The Unhappy Bride, Annushka'. There's shooting in the play; you will cry and you will laugh."

Tanya, the village beauty, would by no means consent to take part in the performance. What's the good of it anyway? She does not like Pavel Mokhov, not the least bit. Pavel Mokhov will, please, not put on such airs. And Pavel Mokhov tried in every way to win Tanya over, but no, she would not budge.

Very well, then. She will sing a different tune when she sees his play.

Rehearsal followed upon rehearsal. The play underwent a basic recasting, and it received a new name: "Annushka's Unmerited Death, or *A Bourzhui* in a Bottle."

For one whole week before the performance the village lived under the sign of "Annushka's Unmerited Death". The girls stole strips of coarse linen from their homes for the scenery; the young fellows pilfered hempseed oil for painting; Filat, the blacksmith, stole from the *sovkhoz* some whitewash and paints; even the priest's daughter managed to help herself in the church to a little bottle of icon-lamp oil.

The tireless Pavel was preparing a huge poster—twenty sheets of paper glued together; he spread it on the floor of his izba, and all day long he crawled, panting, on his belly, lettering in every color of the rainbow, and underlining.

There was a particularly elaborate inscription: "Written collectively by *the author Pavel Terentich Mokhov,* the Red machine-gunner." Then followed a

warning: "In view of the fact that during the tragedy there *will take place shooting* with blank cartridges, I *request* therefore the front rows, as well as the rear ones, *not to start panics* of any sort, in avoidance of *Khodynka";* and at the end: "beginning at six o'clock old style, and in the new style three hours ahead. Respectfully *author Mokhov."* And three more separate notices: "*Please* do not spit on the floor." "Please *do not permit* any private conversations during the performance." "Please *do not swear* during the intermissions."

Every poster ended with: "Respectfully author Mokhov."

After the dress-rehearsal Mokhov said:

"Comrades, success is assured. It will be a thriller!"

He passed by Tanya's izba with his right arm akimbo, with his red-starred cap tilted swaggeringly.

And on the next day he went to town to invite a member of the county Politprosvet to the opening night.

On the day of the performance the public began to come in crowds from nearby villages to Ogryzovo. They looked curiously at the announcement-poster fastened to the gate of the school.

The school could barely accommodate two hundred people, whereas there gathered nearly five hundred. Very early, by three o'clock, the hall was packed. The public spat on the floor, swore, and the poster, "Please do not smoke, respectfully author Mokhov,"—was torn down and used for cigarette-paper. The air in the room was blue with tobacco smoke. The day was warm, stifling. Aunt Matrena, who was pregnant, developed a fit that comes with childbearing. She began to scream, and had to be carried out.

At five o'clock Pavel Mokhov commenced to establish order. Dripping with perspiration, he stood on the porch beside the militiaman, trying to keep back the pressing throng:

"Step back, comrades, step back! It's above the number allowed," he shouted excitedly. "If the walls were made of rubber they could stretch, but they are, unfortunately, of wood."

"Let us in, Pasha. . . . We'll manage somewhere in a corner. . . . Here are eggs . . . here is butter."

The front rows were occupied by the village urchins. Pavel drove them away with sharp oaths and seated the staid people there, and the armchair, which had been brought from the priest's for the city guest, he turned with its legs upward.

"Never mind, brothers. We'll get in during the 'termission," the muzhiks consoled themselves. "We'll yank 'em all out by the neck! They ain't goin' to look all the time!"

About six o'clock there arrived from the station the representative of the county Politprosvet, a fair-haired, handsome youth, Comrade Vasiutin. Pavel Mokhov was greatly astonished—a bearded one had promised to come, and now—there you are! However, Pavel understood discipline to the last tittle. He showered courtesies upon the representative, brought him to his izba, turned him over to his mother's care, and himself hastened to the schoolhouse and rang the first bell. The public spat, blew their noses, became quiet, and made ready to look on.

Comrade Vasiutin washed away the dust of travel, spruced up before the mirror, and sprinkled perfume upon himself. Pavel's mother diligently assisted him in dressing; she was very much surprised to see that

the guest had no cross, and that he was putting on a pair of white trousers.

Garbed like a dude, carrying a cane, puffing his cigarette, the red-cheeked Comrade Vasiutin proceeded to the performance. In the pocket of his elegant coat rested two curd-cakes put there by Pavel's mother.

"Should you get hungry, laddie, you'll have a bite to eat."

The second bell was delayed. Pandemonium reigned in the artists' room. Pavel Mokhov stormed and raved. The young blacksmith, Filat, was getting it. Among other things, Filat was to represent, behind the stage, the voices of birds and animals and the crying of a baby—Pavel had introduced all these details "for naturalness". They had proved a splendid success during the rehearsals, but on the day preceding the performance, the blacksmith partook rather heavily of ice-cold *kvass* after his hot Russian bath, and he had become hoarse—and now the devil alone knows what would come of it—the rooster bellowed like a cow, and the baby cried in a way to strike terror into the heart of a bear.

"Pfui! You boob!" Pavel spat expressively, and casting a rapid glance around, he shouted: "And where is the prompter? Quick, get the prompter! Hurry!"

Meanwhile the hour-hand of the clock was approaching seven. The audience was dripping with perspiration due to the heat and impatience. Here and there girls craned their necks and curiously surveyed the city sport.

"My, what a good-looker! . . . A picture!"

Tanya swam by twice; at last she dared:

"Good evening, comrade!" and extended her hand wet with perspiration. Very tall and plump, she wore a white dress and white slippers and stockings.

"Let us go out to cool off, young lady," and Vasiutin took her arm. Tanya's arm was hot and fleshy.

The girls sighed and fidgeted, the youths cleared their throats meaningly—somebody even gave vent to his feelings in a long-drawn whistle.

The militiaman and the sprightly lad Vanyatka, Ofimiushka's son, were everywhere in the village, seeking the prompter, Fedotych.

"It's awful; what a bore it is in our village! Sheer ignorance. . . ." sighed Tanya, fanning herself and her escort.

"And you, have you lived in town?"

"Yes, sir. In Yaroslavl. Out of foolishness, I was in the service of a rotten mistress, a *bourzhuika.* Now I despise the *bourzhuis.* And there isn't one girl here fit to be a friend. Just think, all our girls are afraid of common-law marriages. And did you ever marry by common law?" And Tanya's full, crimson lips parted slightly in a smile.

"Well, what shall I say. Yes and no. . . . Once in a while," Vasiutin laughed merrily, and his arm could restrain itself no longer. "What a cream-puff you are, Tanechka!"

"Now, really, I'm ashamed. What a flatterer you are, indeed. Oh, how nicely you smell. . . . Oh! You will crumple my waist!"

Tanya and the guest walked hurriedly through a vegetable garden along the flowering beds.

The evening was wondrously calm. The sun was setting. Not a soul was in sight,—only a cat playing with her kittens under a birch-tree. A shaft of light passed through the little window of the barn, piercing the warm semi-darkness. It gilded the mounds of hay piled in the corner.

The odor of grain, dust, mice, and swallows' nests filled the barn.

"Comrades!" Pavel Mokhov appeared before the curtain. "Attention, attention! Owing to circumstances not depending on the public, comrades, the whereabouts of our prompter is not known. . . . So that he is not to be found. . . . So the performance, comrades, will begin according to the new style."

And at once they yelled:

"Well, then, let it be new. . . . Hurry up and begin, Pashka. . . . Some are here since early morning. . . . They've got cramps from hunger."

And others shouted:

"It's all a fake! Give me back my pot cheese! Come across with my eggs!"

But Pavel did not stop to listen. Leaving the militiaman and Ofimiushka's Vanyatka in charge, he rushed out to make a personal search for the prompter.

The prompter, an old soldier named Fedotych, is Pavel Mokhov's foster-uncle. He is a good reader at funeral services, and, when drunk, is very fond of a scrimmage; hence all his front teeth are missing. In spite of this he is an excellent and resourceful prompter; should an actor falter, he himself at once begins to shout the necessary words, skillfully imitating the actor's voice.

Pavel ran to his izba. Just as he thought—locked. He rushed to the neighbors', to the barn, to the bathhouse. And there he shook all over with fury—Fedotych was lying on his back, and, his legs raised high in the air, he was swishing them with the bath-twigs; his head was generously soaped, and he looked like a fat old woman in a white cap.

"You've done for me, you have!" Pavel Mokhov stamped and shrieked.

The twigs swished hotly and rustled like silk.

"Is that you, Pavlukha? Hurry up, throw off your shirt and pants! There's a lot of heat, brother. . . ."

"The performance! You old idiot! . . . The performance! . . ."

"What performance? What are you batting about? What day is it?" And suddenly he jumped up: "Ah—ah—ah—ah—! . . ."

"Oversteamed?"

Fedotych dived into his shirt.

"Rinse your noddle! It's full of soap."

"Ah—ah—ah—. . . . And I, the jackass, went to the woods picking berries. . . . Ah—ah—ah—ah! . . ."

The bell rang out invitingly. The stage opened to view and with it opened the mouth of every spectator. A well-fed and portly *popadya* (priest's wife) appeared on the stage.

No girl in the village would consent to play the old woman, so the blacksmith, Filat, took this part upon himself. His face is as long as that of a horse. On his head he had hoisted up a huge hat—on its front sits a crow with outspread wings, and dense shrubbery in bloom is draped all around it; on his nose is a pair of homemade spectacles—like cartwheels. He is very tall and skinny, but he has stuffed in, wherever necessary, so much padding that the dressing gown of the local merchant's wife, a fat and undersized woman, was ripping at the seams and barely reached to Filat's knees. From under the fringes protruded his skinny legs wrapped in rags, and, his

legs twisting and crossing each other, Filat came gracefully forward.

"An African pig on stilts," whispered Comrade Vasiutin to Tanya, who breathed hotly into his face.

Tanya snickered, and the *popadya,* wagging her rear, hurried with mincing steps to the cupboard, took out a quart flask of whisky, and drank three glasses one after the other.

"Hey, what a souse!" a voice in one of the rear rows shouted enviously.

"Give us a drink!"

"Mother! Mother!" The daughter, Annushka, rushed in, wearing a white apron. "Aren't you ashamed to swill vodka like that?"

The *popadya* hemmed and said in a hoarse bass:

"My child, it's none of your business as regards the conduct of your own mother!"

Laughter came from the public: "A noble lady, —gee, what a voice!" . . . And Pavel Mokhov, behind the scenes, put his hands over his ears and turned green with rage.

"So?" retorted Annushka in a ringing voice. "Remember, mother, we have the suffrage. I will go from your priestly class to the proletariat. . . . I am a communist, I want you to know!"

"What? What? A communist? And your intended? Such a gentleman as he is. I'll show you a communist!" thundered the mother in basso profundo, running up and down the stage—the crow and the bushes shaking.

Pavel Mokhov was also running to and fro behind the scenes, and venomously hissing to Filat through the cracks:

"Why do you bellow like an ox, you fat-head! Softer, softer!"

This angry reproach at once confused Filat; the words jumped out of his memory, and the cues of the prompter flew past his ears into space.

Annushka also lost her head.

"I'll go away, I'll go away!" she whined, and her eyes were glued to the toothless mouth of Fedotych, like iron to a magnet.

The *popadya* coughed to clear her throat, and, just catching the cue from Fedotych, rasped still louder in a resounding octave:

"Shame thyself, my daughter! Thy name is nonentity!"

"Disgrace, disgrace! Rotten skunk!" Pavel Mokhov's snakelike hissing lashed up and down the stage. "I'll smash your mug for you!"

"Disgrace, disgrace!" Annushka wrung her hands, and, in tears, slunk away, behind the scenes.

"Disgrace! Rotten skunk! I'll smash your mug for you!" thundered *popadya*-Filat.

Fedotych, in his booth, banged the floor with his fist and spat disdainfully: "Such actors!" and suddenly, to the astonishment of the public, an invisible, twittering, feminine voice was heard from the stage:

"O my daughter. . . . I forgive you magnanimously," articulated Fedotych in a high falsetto. "Come to me and I will press you to my own bosom. So. God bless you, God bless you, God bless you," and he hissed furiously: "Where is Annushka? Send Annushka here, you devils!"

Annushka was propelled from behind the stage by strong hands. Advancing with mincing steps and exclaiming sorrowfully, "But I tell you, I don't know my part. . . . I got mixed up, I got mixed up. . . ." she ran to the *popadya* who stood silently, like a mortar, holding on to her huge abdomen.

"Bless her, you devil!" the prompter banged the floor with his fist.

"God bless you!" the *popadya* uttered in deep tones, like an archdeacon.

Pavel Mokhov darted to and fro behind the stage.

"Curtain! . . . To the devil with Filat! . . . Ah, you devils . . . start all over again!"

But the bourgeois betrothed saved the situation; he knew his part to perfection; playfully he came out on the stage; the *popadya* and Annushka again gathered their wits. Fedotych's prompting resounded throughout the hall, like a hundred geese, and in his joy he kept hastily swallowing home brew; the fumes of alcohol were wafted from the prompter's booth.

Then there entered a little, bearded priest in a robe and a high church-hat askew—Annushka's father.

"A priest, a priest!" the merry uproar rolled through the hall. "Look, brothers, the clergy are in for it now."

The unfortunate Annushka is being sold by her drunken parents; the suitor and the priest begin carousing to the music of the accordion, and dancing; the *popadya* dashes into a mad jig; the pillows slide down from her bosom to her stomach. Annushka is weeping. The audience is delighted: they clap their hands. *"Bitz-bitz-bitz, bravo!"* Annushka weeps more bitterly. But suddenly a workman-communist in a leather jacket bursts in.

"I will save you!"

"My dear, my dear!" Annushka throws herself upon his neck.

The suitor makes a show of fight, but the communist whips out a revolver.

"She is mine. Death to the *bourzhuis!*"

Priest and suitor crawl under the bed in fear. Curtain. Applause. Exultant shouts: *"Bitz-bitz-bitz!"*

The intermission lasted a full hour. It grew dark. Two smoky kerosene lamps were lit. The darkness turned half-gray.

Among the actors it is like in a lunatic asylum: some cry, some laugh, some con their lines out loud.

"Swallow 'em raw." Fedotych is doctoring the blacksmith's voice: "See, there's something stuck in your gizzard!"

The blacksmith takes out egg after egg from the basket where the voluntary contributions are piled; he has already swallowed ten, but in vain.

"Devil take it!" storms Pavel Mokhov. "Where did you hear a *popadya* speak like that? You're like a bath-house attendant, and not a *popadya!*"

"Just keep on swallowing . . . it'll ease up," growls Fedotych. His fat, shaven face is red and damp, as if scalded with boiling water. The home brew in the bottle is diminishing rapidly.

The public was leaving the hall in a dense mass. Others were pressing in. The doorframe was creaking. With a cracking sound buttons came ripping off shirts and coats. Some carried their chairs high above their heads, so as not to lose their seats. "Push, fellows, push, squeeze the guts out of the women!"

A bone-breaking jam prevailed in the corridor. The fat, spectacled son of the priest was pressing forward with more determination than anyone else. With his elbows and fists he poked ferociously the stomachs, sides, and backs that were in his way, repeating politely: "If you please! If you please!" They stuck a dead mouse into the pocket of old Yemelya, who had a

mortal dread of mice, and then asked him for a pinch of snuff.

The bell rang. The people surged back.

Uncle Antip, from a neighboring village, stood undecided, and when the street became deserted he waved his hand. "Ah, the dickens with them and their comedy." He swung the municipal chair up on his back, and glancing apprehensively at the thickening dusk, started home with God's help.

"Well, I'll come again on Sunday."

"Attention, comrades, attention!" Pavel Mokhov was struggling to make himself heard above the din of the crowd. "Owing to unforeseen circumstances, comrades, the *popadya* was tall, and now she will become short. And the father, that is to say, her husband, on the contrary, will become very tall. But don't mind that. This is a perturbation in the parts —that is all. And so I will now ring, comrades, the third and the last bell!"

The curtain was pulled aside and the audience stared with half-sleepy eyes.

Out waddles the *popadya;* she is exactly the same in dress, only she has short legs and her voice is squeaky, and after her the well-fed priest with the same mane and beard—only the robe reaches to his knees and he has long, spindly legs wrapped in rags.

The public is moved to laughter and exclamations:

"Why did you chop off the *popadya's* legs?"

"Come, give us a dance, grandmother!"

"Hey you, priest-and-a-half!"

The alcohol-soaked Fedotych could hardly crawl into his booth, but he prompted with surprising clearness and distinctness; all the spectators, even those in the corridor, had the pleasure of hearing two plays

at once—one from the booth and another from the stage.

Fedotych's grease-lamp—a tow-wick dipped in a cracked saucer of lamb's grease—was smoking right into his nose.

The action developed on the stage as smoothly as if oiled. The bourgeois suitor was expelled, and the communist established himself in the house. Annushka gave birth to a child, which lay in the cradle and bawled. The priest (the blacksmith Filat) is rocking the cradle.

He says:

"This is a communist baby," and he sings a lullaby in a deep voice:

"Sleep, my baby, sleep, my dear,
The communists will soon be here."

"There, now—you have a baby," says the *popadya* maliciously. "And now they're again driving your boob of a communist to the war."

"Oh, woe is me, woe is me!" exclaims Annushka, and sits down by the cradle in order to deliver a monologue over the child. She glued her eyes to the booth, and there a black-tailed little light is smoking, and Fedotych—what can be the matter?—has screwed up his nose, and bared his teeth.

"Oh, woe is me, woe is me! . . . My poor orphan! . . ."

Suddenly a rattling and snorting was heard from the booth, resounding throughout the hall: *"Ch-ch-ch-chikh!"* and the feeble light went out. Fedotych stamped about, sneezed once more, and shouted:

"Hey, Pashka! Quick, give me a light. . . . My gre . . . *ch-ch-chikh*—grease-lamp went out."

Behind the stage there is scampering, whispering, and swearing; all the matches are spent, and the lighter will not work.

"Woe, woe is me, woe is me!" . . . hopelessly moans Annushka.

"Wait there, you and your woe!" growls Fedotych, clambering out of the booth. "It's woe for you, and double woe for me. See, the grease-lamp's gone out."

He crawled to the edge of the stage, shaking his head like a bull about to gore someone.

"Ch-ch-chikh! . . . Comrades. . . . *A-p-chkhi!* . . . Fie, devil take it! . . . Who has a match?"

And the public answered with laughter and merriment:

"Here, old chap! Here—here—here!"

And again everything runs smoothly.

Annushka was breaking her heart so naturally over the babe, and spoke so touchingly, that she produced the strongest impression upon the audience; the women began to blow their noses, the muzhiks snuffled like camels.

Ofimiushka's Vanyatka had hired himself out, for a wage of three eggs, to cry like a baby in place of Filat. He cried behind the stage with feeling and in all possible ways. A muzhik even shouted to Annushka sympathizingly:

"Give him the breast!"

And a woman's voice:

"I guess he must be wet, the little one."

In short, the act ended splendidly. All were satisfied, except Pavel Mokhov. Gnashing his teeth, he grabbed the drunken Fedotych by the shoulders and shook him.

"Are you an uncle of mine, or the last bloody hound!

Couldn't you get soused later! Such polemics as you started with your grease-lamp, you old devil!"

In the village the roosters sang, for the third time.

Some young lads, playing on an accordion, followed Tanya and Vasiutin at a distance as the two were again walking along the flowering beds. The young fellows were yelling a ditty by no means complimentary to Tanya.

"Hey you, actorers!" the public shouted in the hall. "Work a little faster. . . . Some are already asleep."

And indeed, many were fast asleep on the window-sills, and along the walls beneath the windows.

When the curtain was drawn the silence was rent and shaken by an inhuman snoring. It was Grandpa Andron, who, bent threefold, was resting his bald head against the back of an ample woman sitting in front of him; he was snoring, and slavering at the mouth. The other sleepers seconded him diligently.

The actors were in a heightened mood; this was a merry act—dancing, singing, ring-games, and it ended with the death of Annushka. The scoundrelly bourgeois suitor, who had been knifed in the preceding act, was to appear suddenly and fell the unfortunate Annushka with a deadly bullet. This was the climax of the play. This must deeply stir the spectators. It is not in vain that Pavel Mokhov, with an enigmatically triumphant smile, is pouring into a bear-rifle a generous charge of powder—it will go off like a cannon.

But if Pavel Mokhov had seen with what fire the eyes of treacherous Tanya were burning, and with what passion her heart was beating in her breast, his

smile would at once have given place to frenzied jealousy.

The couple sat close together, shoulder to shoulder. Comrade Vasiutin smelt of perfume and tobacco; the beautiful Tanya—of corn-dust, mice, and swallows' nests.

Pines and firs. A river bank. Annushka sits on a stone, the child in her arms.

"What a pleasant evening," she says, "sleep, my little one, sleep. There a cow is lowing. There a doggy is barking. And how sweetly the birdies sing. There a nightingale. . . ."

The eggs had apparently taken effect; Filat was trilling behind the stage his whole gamut of sounds. A number of young boys and girls appear. They start to play ring-games. The nightingale sings, the ducks quack, the frogs croak, the cow lows.

"Let me, too, gaze upon your gaiety, sweet friends," says Annushka through her tears. "Father and mother turned me out of the house with my unfortunate babe. And my husband, the communist, has been slain by the White villains. It's not the first day that I go hungry."

Annushka sobs bitterly. They comfort her, they caress the child. Somewhere a horse neighs, a cat meows, hens cackle.

"Oh, oh! Give me back my happy days!"

The spectators sigh. The snoring from all sides grows in volume. Fedotych, who has long ago fallen asleep in his booth, adds his nasal notes. Grandpa Andron's bald head has slipped from the auntie's neck to her luxuriant back.

Suddenly the bourgeois suitor jumps out from the bushes; a wooden pistol is in his hand.

The tragic moment has come.

Behind the stage Pavel Mokhov cocked the trigger.

"Ah, here is where my faithless one is!" And the suitor rushes toward Annushka. "Away with you! I'll shoot you all!"

Screaming, shuffling, turmoil, and in a trice the stage is empty.

The bourgeois's face is red, frenzied. He grabs the child, bangs its head against the floor, and throws it into the river.

Annushka stands petrified, and the entire audience is horrified.

"Well!" shouts the suitor, and pulls her by the arm.

Pavel Mokhov inserted the muzzle of his gun into a crack in the wall.

"But papa and mamma and I, we all thought that you were dead," said Annushka, all atremble.

"Nothing of the sort. . . . Well, you communist viper, pray to God. Death to you, unfortunate one!" and the suitor leveled his pistol at Annushka's breast.

"Ah, farewell, beautiful world!" Annushka swayed and glanced back, choosing a spot where to fall.

Pavel Mokhov voluptuously released the trigger, but the gun missed fire.

The audience opened their mouths and held their breath.

"Death to you, unfortunate one!" shouted the suitor ferociously.

"Ah, farewell, beautiful world!" moaned Annushka desperately, and swayed.

With shaking hand Pavel Mokhov inserted a new cartridge, but the ignitor again missed fire. Swearing and hissing, Pavel selected the freshest of the rusty cartridges.

The suitor glanced imploringly toward the back of the stage, and twirling his pistol over his head he again leveled it at the breast of the extremely flustered Annushka:

"Death to you, unfortunate one!"

Somebody in the audience shouted:

"Well, why doesn't she die?"

"Ah, farewell, beautiful world!" for the third time moaned Annushka, and the ignitor behind the stage missed fire for the third time.

Pavel Mokhov's hair stood on end and he gnashed his teeth. The suitor threw away his wooden pistol, shouted, "Fie!" and walked away, swearing.

Annushka was completely at a loss what to do; at last she swayed and fell.

"Curtain! Curtain!" was the clamor behind the stage.

But at this moment a shot rang out like thunder.

The whole audience jumped up and gasped.

The snoring prompter, Fedotych, also jumped up, raising the booth with his head. The sleepers rolled from the windows to the floor, and those who were sleeping on the floor started up, fell down again, and began to crawl about, wondering what had happened.

Annushka ran away, and the curtain began slowly to close.

"Comrades!" Vasiutin quickly mounted a chair. "I am a member of the repertory collegium of the dramatic section of the first sector of the county Kultagitprosvet. . . ."

The muzhiks laughed sarcastically:

"Hear, hear! Go on!"

"Talk like a Christian! . . . Talk Russian!"

"Comrades! The main building of the neighboring

sovkhoz is to be turned into a people's house for sensible amusements. I have the paper. Here it is. The Soviet government readily comes forward to meet your spiritual needs. And now shout after me: 'Author, Author, Author!' "

And the audience thundered after Comrade Vasiutin.

But behind the stage the author wept, his head resting on a table.

Vasiutin dived behind the stage and stopped in bewilderment.

"Comrade Mokhov! Aren't you ashamed of yourself? The public wants you. Do you hear? Come—quick!"

Pavel Mokhov wiped his eyes with his fists and ceased completely to understand what was happening to him. He was walking somewhere, he stopped somewhere. Hundreds of burning eyes stared at him from the semi-darkness.

Meanwhile Fedotych, reeling, was searching about on the stage; his heart lusted for a scrimmage.

"Comrades! Here stands before you the author, the writer of the play which you have just been enjoying. . . . Let us honor him. Long live the gifted Pavel Mokhov! Bravo! Bravo!" Vasiutin clapped his hands, and, following suit, those on the stage and then the whole audience applauded.

"Bra-v-vo! *Bitz-bitz-bitz!* Bravo! There's a boy, Pashka! Never mind! . . . Hear, hear! . . . Pavel, speak! Why do you stand still? . . ."

"Let us honor him in the name of all those present! Hurrah!" Vasiutin did his utmost.

Fedotych spat on his fist, cleared his throat, and clenched his teeth.

Pavel cast an eagle's glance at Tanya, looked at the

window through which the pink dawn was glimmering, and in a sort of moon-calf exultation, gaspingly began his speech:

"Comrades! Yes, I really am the collective author. . . ." But suddenly a sharp blow on the back of his neck threw him off his feet.

"I'll teach you to shake up your old uncle!" Fedotych growled hoarsely, swinging his fist over him. "I'll honor you for all those present! . . ."

The next day Comrade Vasiutin left for town. Together with him disappeared the beautiful Tanya. And after "Annushka's Unmerited Death" the school missed seven government-owned chairs.

Pavel Mokhov, crushed by the cruel blow of fate, for a long time drank heavily in the company of his foster-uncle, Fedotych. They drank in the barn, in the identical barn, behind the vegetable garden, near the school.

"Don't be angry, nephew, that I banged you on the neck," stuttered the tipsy Fedotych. "But if we're goin' to act such th'atricals often—we'll be left withou' furnisher, and withou' gals."

LEATHER JACKETS

"And the last shall be first."

UPSTAIRS, IN ORDYNIN'S HOUSE, IN THE ISPOLCOM quarters—(there were no flower-pots in the windows here)—there gathered men in leather jackets—the Bolsheviks. These fellows, in leather jackets, were, every mother's son of them, leather beauties; each one strong, with a shock of hair falling from under the cap down the neck; each one's skin fitted tightly to the jaws; lips were set, movements were downright and firm. They are the pick of the flabby and uncouth Russian people. In leather jackets —you can't dampen them. This we know, this we want, this we have decided—and no turning back. Peter Oryeshin, the poet, said truly:

"Or freedom to the destitute we'll bring,
Or—in the field, from a post we'll swing."

Arkhip Arkhipov spent the days at the Ispolcom, writing papers; then he made his way wearily through the city and the factory, attending conferences, gatherings, meetings. He wrote papers; knitting his brows —his beard slightly disheveled—he held his pen like an ax. At the meetings he pronounced foreign words thus: "enfasize," "enegretically," "litephonogram," "foonction," "budgdet," etc. In a leather jacket, with a beard like Pugachev's. Funny. And what is still funnier, Arkhip Arkhipov woke up with the sun and, hiding the fact from all eyes, studied books: Kiselev's *Algebra,* Kistyakovski's *Economic Geography,* the *History of Russia in the Nineteenth Century* (the

Granat edition), Marx's *Capital*, Ozerov's *Science of Finance*, Weizman's *Accounting*, and *German Self-Taught;* he also studied Gavrilkin's little dictionary of foreign words incorporated in the Russian language.

Leather jackets.

Bolsheviks. Bolsheviks. Yes. So it is. That is what the Bolsheviks are.

The Whites retreated in March, and at the very beginning of March an expedition came from Moscow for the purpose of ascertaining what had been left of the factories and plants by the Whites and the squalls of the Civil War. The expedition included the representatives from OTK and KHMU, and from the Department of Metals, and Gomz and Tsept and TSPKP and Prombureau, and RKI and VTSK, and other industrial organizations—all specialists. At a meeting in a district capital it was demonstrated as clearly as twice two that the situation of the plants was worse than catastrophic, that there were neither raw materials nor instruments, neither workers nor fuel, and that it was impossible to resume the operation of the plants. Impossible. I, the author, was one of that expedition; the chief of the expedition was Comrade K.—his patronymic was Lukich. When the order was given in the train to get ready to start,—(we were in the train as an armed detachment)—I, the author, thought that we would go back to Moscow, since it was impossible for anything to be done. But we went to the plants, for there is nothing that cannot be done—because not to do is impossible. We went, because the nonspecialist, Bolshevik Lukich, reasoned very simply that the need for doing a thing is over only after the thing is done. And human hands can do anything.

Bolsheviks.

Leather jackets.

"Foonction enegretically." That is what the Bolsheviks are. And deuce take you all, do you hear?—you, sour-sweet lemonade! . . .

Shaft No. 3, at the Taezhevsky plant. At depth 320, *i.e.,* half a mile under the ground, borings were being exploded. The drillmen were drilling waist deep in hot water; the fusemen loaded the borings with dynamite and exploded the borings at depth 320 in nearly boiling water—water up to their chests. The fusemen had to grope for the fuse in the water, to grope for the borings, to insert, by divination, the cartridges, to place under the cartridges the ignitor of fulminating mercury, and, with the rubber fuse, to explode these cartridges—fifteen or twenty of them.

A signal upward:

"Ready!"

A signal downward:

"Ready!"

A signal upward:

"Firing!"

A signal downward:

"Fire away!"

One after the other the fuses flare up, one after the other the bluish flames hiss and whistle over the water and dive into the rubber tube, under the water. The last blue light has whistled and dived. A leap into the bucket and the signal upward:

"Heave up!"

"Right-o!" And with a speed of fifty feet per second (the limit for preserving life), through rain and darkness, the bucket shoots upward from death to

light. And in the depths below charges of dynamite are exploding—the first, second, third.

Shaft No. 3, depth 320—two men are blasting the borings.

"Ready!"

"Ready!"

"Firing!"

"Fire away!"

One finished before the other and jumped into the bucket. The second lit the last fuse (the blue flames hissed and dived), and grabbed the rope.

"Heave up, lively!"

Whether the second man stumbled, or the engineer was too speedy—the bucket shot upward through rain, darkness, and whistling; the man remained below, and the last little light dived under water.

So the first sent the signal upward:

"Halt! Lower away!"

The bucket swayed in the darkness, hung suspended in the rain.

"Lower away!"

Then the other sent the signal:

"Heave up!"—for what would be the good of a second death?

"Lower away!"—thus the first.

"Heave up!"—thus the second.

And the bucket oscillated in the darkness. Each one was sacrificing his life for his brother, here at depth 320, where death and funeral are simultaneous.

The engineer probably understood what was going on in the shaft. With deadly speed he sent the bucket down, and with deadly speed he jerked the bucket upward, to the rumbling of the exploding dynamite down below, where death was. And, once up above, all three, the engineer and the two fusemen, first

and second, felt like having a drink. And as there was no revolution at that time, in what other way could they find the opportunity to "foonction enegretically"?

Leather jackets. Bolsheviks.

That evening, in Ordynin's house. Having taken off his boots, Yegor Sobachkin was luxuriously kneading his toes with his fingers. Crouching on the bed near the lamp, as if on all fours, he remained for a long time intent on the pamphlet he was reading; then he addressed his neighbor, who was absorbed in a perusal of the newspaper, *Izvestia*:

"And what do you think, Comrade Makarov, is human life determined by the reality or by the idea? Now, when one comes to think of it, there's reality even in the idea. . . ."

THE LAWBREAKERS

HE WAS CAUGHT AT THE DEPOT. HE HAD BEEN buying foodstuffs from the market women. He took his arrest with the cheerfulness of an old-timer. He winked to the gray man who held the rifle, and asked:

"Where you goin' to take me, comrade, to the Rtucheka or the Gubcheka?"

The soldier spat in disgusted amazement.

"A hot one, you are! It's a cinch you've been through everything."

They took him to the Ortcheka, too. Then they took him to the Gubcheka. There he sat down quietly on the floor of the anteroom, awaiting his turn. When questioned, he answered willingly and cheerfully.

"Your name?"

"Grigori Ivanovich Peskov."

"What district?" the commandant questioned in a weary, disdainful manner.

"From far away. Guess I'd have to go some to find my way there now. I'm from Ivanovo-Voznesensk."

"Well, how did you happen to come to Siberia?"

"Call this Siberia! I've been a lot farther still."

And with these words he glanced proudly at those present.

"But what the devil brought you here from Ivanovo-Voznesensk?"

He corrected stolidly:

"Not the devil but a train."

And when the soldiers and the man who was scrawling something on paper with a pen roared with

laughter, he responded merely by spitting gravely on the floor.

"They brought me on a train, comrade. The 'Mericans. Some Petrograd kids with teachers was brought here to fatten 'em up. It's the Red Cross, or something. None o' my business, though. 'Mericans, that's what they are. Lenin must have paid 'em for us: 'Go ahead, feed 'em up'. Then Kolchak came. Some went farther on and some died off, and I got into a children's shelter and from there I ran away to the country."

"What did you do there?"

"Worked as a farm-hand for the priest. Don't you think 'cause I'm skinny! I'm handy for work, brother!"

"And did you enroll as a volunteer with Kolchak?"

"Yep. But I ran away."

"How did you get to be a volunteer then?"

"When the Reds came, everybody ran away and I ran with 'em. Well, nobody wanted me, so I enrolled as a volunteer."

"But why did you run away from the Reds? Were you afraid?"

"Afraid? . . . What's there to be afraid of? I'm of the Red Party myself, I am. But they all started to scoot, so I scooted, too."

The soldiers again roared with laughter. The commandant reprimanded them and gave the order:

"Search him."

With the same willingness he let them search him. He raised his hands in the manner of one accustomed to this procedure. His large, gray eyes sparkled merrily in the pallid, childish face. They lit everything up, like spots of sunlight. They lit up the emaciated, shrunken, little face, and the shaggy, lice-

ridden head of the color of dirty straw. A large sum of money was taken away from the boy, together with a keepsake locket with silvered lids, a pound of tea, and a few yards of woven stuff that was in his kit.

"Where did you get the money?"

"Stole some of it, and made some tradin'."

"What were you trading in?"

"Tobacco, cigarettes, and sometimes I'd swipe somethin' and sell it."

"He's a real one!" said the commandant, astonished. "Where are your parents?"

"Pa was killed in the Joiman war, and ma got some new kids. So she went somewhere with her new feller and the kids, and fixed me up on the 'Merican train."

And again he met the commandant's dull gaze with the clear shining of his eyes. The commandant shook his head. He wanted to say, "A hopeless case." But the light in Grishka's eyes stopped him. He smiled and rubbed his chin.

"Well, what did you do when you were with Kolchak?"

"Nothin'. Just enrolled and ran away."

"So you're of the Red Party?" recollected the commandant.

"Right you are. Give us a light."

"You ought to be spanked for smoking. Well, here's a light! How old are you?"

"Fourteen last St. Gregory's Day."

"So you know the saints. And why do you wear that locket?"

"To remember my dad. He'll feel better in heaven when he gets to know 'bout it. Mother forgot him, but Grishka remembers."

"And you think he's in heaven?"

"Where else? The soul has to have some place to kick around in when it leaves the body."

The commandant's eyes again wore their blank, official expression.

"That'll do, now! I'll have to detain you."

"To jail? All right. But the eats there is punk . . . well, never mind. I c'n stand it a while. Goo-by."

They remembered Grishka for a long time at the Cheka.

He was soon summoned from the prison by the Juvenile Crime Commission. He liked it less at the Commission than at the Gubcheka. At the latter place they were jolly fellows. They laughed. And here everybody pitied him, and then the doctor pestered him for a long time.

"What's he frettin' like that for?" wondered Grishka. "He's measured my head and my fingers. Maybe he's tryin' to make my marks fit into somebody's. . . . Bet they're lookin' for some feller with a block like mine. . . ."

Another unpleasant thing was that the doctor looked him over for a long time, naked. He had been scrubbed clean at the bathhouse, but the doctor examined him in such a way that Grishka felt as if his body were dirty. Then the doctor started to question him about the shameful things. That was not right. Grishka had seen a good deal and fooled around a bit himself. But it isn't right to talk about it. It's disgusting to recollect it. And he doesn't feel like fooling around any more. When he emerged from the doctor's his face was red and his eyes seemed to have lost their sparkle. He had aroused him so, the "goggle-eyed one".

But in the evening, at the home for juvenile criminals, he was cheerful again. He approved of the food.

"This ain't like the slap-hash at the Soviet dining room, brother. This is milk. The *kasha* is sweet. Bits of meat in the soup. Great!"

But at night he felt ill at ease. The boys were restless and the teacher scolded them. Somehow the teacher reminded him of the doctor. For a long time Grishka could not fall asleep. He wondered why.

"There, that's it! Reck'n I ain't used to the piller. It bothers me."

And he spent the whole night in sad yearning, half asleep, half awake. At times he saw his mother. She was combing his hair and saying:

"You're growing, Grishenka, you're growing, sonny! We'll have a rest when you get big. You'll make money and you'll take care of father and mother. . . . My own boy!"

And she kissed him.

It's strange! His eyes are open and the lamp is throwing its light up toward the ceiling. He knows that it is the Children's Home. His mother, surely, is not here. And yet he feels it on his cheek—she kissed him. And he wants to cry. But he hemmed like a grown-up man, restrained his tears, and turned to the other side. And then he seemed to see the doctor. He recalled the women. And again he felt a sense of disgust. And he was uneasy. He wanted to pray, but could not recollect "Our Father". And he did not know any other prayer. In this way he tossed about all night long.

Day followed day. Life would not have been so bad if it hadn't been for the boredom. In the morning, after breakfast, they were marched to a big hall where

something was read to them. But always something boring. One boy was good and another was bad. . . . He felt like giving him a kick, the good one! And then the lady-teachers would arrive.

"Come, children, let us sing and play. Form a ring."

And they would form a ring. In the hall they were together with the girls. The girls fidget and keep singing the same song—about a little pine-tree, a little hare, about some cake. Or, they would spread their arm like this, and bend their heads now to one side, now to the other:

"Where the willows are bending over the pool. . . ."

At first it was amusing, but after a time he grew tired of it. After all, his head isn't hired out, it's his own. You wag it and wag it, but it all gets to be a nuisance.

But best of all was the "International"! A good, incomprehensible word. And it sounds so grown up. No little pine-tree for you there, brother!

"Arise, ye pris'ners of starvation! . . ."*

Good! But he is soon tired of this too. They make him sing it every day. He would gladly sing it himself at times. But sometimes he just doesn't want to sing. And yet, it was because of the "International" that he smashed Shorty George's face for him. Georgie is one of the *bourzhuis*. He has an aunt who brings him cakes. So once Georgie says to Grishka:

"Here's the way to sing it: 'Arise ye sheenies and ye kikes!' "

But Grishka is of the Red Party. He knows that the sheenies are human beings too. It's just a way of scoffing at the Soviet rule. So he trimmed Georgie off, good and proper. And after that they had it in

*A line of the "International," the Russian national anthem.

for him. He had stood up for the Soviet power, and for that the elder Aunt Zina and Konstantin Stepanych were calling him a hooligan. And when the Institution linen disappeared, they questioned the three of them; the three who were thieves. Grishka wondered:

"Dumb-bells! Catch me swipin' anythin' here! They feed me well, so far. And who are thieves, who? You'd steal yourself if you had nothin' to eat. When I run away, then I'll steal."

The idea was taking firmer hold of him, to run away. The worst thing of all is that it is so dull here —dead. They had promised to teach him a trade, but they're not doing it.

They say there are no tools. And he is sick and tired of making pleatings of paper. And these pleatings he pasted to the wall of the water-closet and wrote on them with a pencil, signing his name:

"This is the place for you; this den is for relief of men."

He usually wrote badly, along a slant, but this time he traced the letters legibly. And from that time on the supervisors were against him. Well, let them be. That red-headed one, Konstantin Stepanych, cares only for playing the guitar and taking snapshots. He's snapped everybody's picture, the pimple-face! He's a mean cuss. He doesn't dare use his hands, so he stings with his eyes, like a snake. He looks at everyone as if sniffing: what kind of man are you? He himself smokes into the vent in his room, but to the boys he says:

"A decent man is not supposed to smoke."

And what's smoking, anyway?—it's all bunk. Here he hadn't smoked for a good long time. He gave it up, and didn't feel that he wanted to smoke. But

when Konstantin Stepanych starts his spiel about smoking, and begins to sniff and to ask: "Who's been smoking?"—then a desire comes over him to light a cigarette. And Aunt Zina calls everybody darling. Pats 'em on the head. She's all honey and pie. She doesn't feel a bit like it, but she pats. And she tortures one's soul with her gab:

"Now, that is not nice, darling! You are clothed and given shelter; you must appreciate this, dearie. You must button all your buttons and you must comb your hair. You are quite a big boy, remember! . . . Do you want me to read a book to you? And you busy yourself with your drawing, meanwhile."

The sugary witch! And then she has made us sick and tired with all kinds of questionnaires. Every day the children write about what they like and what they do not like, what they want, and what book pleased them most. Here again Grishka got her angry. Last time he didn't answer any of the questions, but wrote:

"I don't like and don't want no questeenares."

She turned white. But she laughed low, pursed up her lips, and drawled in a thin voice:

"U-uh, I don't like you! You're one of those high and mighty boys!"

Very well, then don't. You may like your Georgie. He buttons all his buttons, and he rules the paper and answers all the questions as required. But as soon as she turns her back he starts making indecent gestures at her.

The girls here are all good for nothing. They've learned from Aunt Zina to talk in squeaky voices, and they cringe and fawn until it turns your stomach. And meanwhile they carry on secretly with the boys. Manka from the mines is not so bad. She sings sad

songs and likes to read books. She looks as if she were made of wax, and she coughs all the time. Sick. But Grishka does not venture to talk to her. He is afraid. He has seen enough of girls, and he does not like them. Grishka does not like anybody. And everything has become loathsome to him: the bedrooms with blankets all exactly alike, the dining room with the new wooden tables. He must escape! The Children's Home was in the building of a monastery. Behind high walls. And a sentinel stood at the gate. Grishka reasoned:

"That's right. We're lawbreakers. That's how they write about us: juvenile lawbreakers. It sounds swell! In plain talk you would say thieves, convicts, but in a learned way,—lawbreakers."

He liked this name as much as he did the "International". Grishka was proud of it and he was proud of the sentinel at the gate. But just now the sentinel was in his way. Grishka wanted to escape.

Spring came. When you walk out into the yard you feel such a longing. Your nostrils quiver like the nostrils of a dog, and you feel like flying away. The sun has grown kinder and warms you right through. The snow has become soft. The ditches are already dug and the water in them runs under very, very thin ice. The sleighs no longer glide over the roads—they rasp. The horses' hoofs no longer thud—they splash. The twigs on the trees are naked, thin, and joyous. In the fall, yellow dead leaves were trembling on them, and in winter they bore the weight of the snow. Now they have thrown everything off. They became light and airy, and seemed to stretch out, like after an illness. They cannot breathe fresh air enough. They ask the sky for water. The boys behind the wall praise the spring all day long with shouts and whoops.

Oh, how he wants to escape! . . . It is all right in the yard when they let them play as they please. But he does not want to play ring-games and sing songs about cake. A game of ball—that's the thing.

The nuns lived in the yard. They were closely crowded in, but not yet evicted. Every morning and every evening the bell tolled mournfully. Black shadows came out of their crannies, gliding softly, as if swimming, and moved toward the church. The church stood in a corner of the yard and its main entrance faced the street. The nuns walked, young and old, but they all moved as if they were not alive. Not as they went about during the day, in the yard or in the bakery. Then they resembled living women; they quarreled with the kids and screeched. And the kids teased them. They spat into the well, and once they opened the door of the church and shouted:

"Lenin, Trotsky, Sovnarcom!"

The nuns complained to the Gubnarobraz. Then the war was on. Life became more interesting.

The spring was eating up the snow more and more greedily. The church door was opened. The sun-saturated air refreshed the gloomy arches. Drunk with freedom, it burst into the church and came out of the church into the yard with a mournful Lenten wail of human voices, with weeping about a temple which never may be entered. The nuns flitted by more often toward the church. They cried out to God longer in their repentant frenzy. And these black, noiseless shadows over the bright face of the spring, and the Lenten hymns, and the clamorous noise of the Spring, completely confused Grishka's soul. The supervisors were glad. He submitted to all the teaching. He sat quietly for hours. Only, his eyes grew empty. But Grishka lived his own

inner life. He woke up nights thinking of freedom. It was difficult to escape. Six elder boys rifled the Mother Superior's room, and escaped. But they were caught. So they started a riot. They were already young men. Their mustaches were beginning to sprout. They were sent to work in a camp. And stricter supervision was established over the others. Another sentinel and an agent of the Cheka were added and a few more supervisors. But an accident helped.

The war between the children and the nuns became more and more turbulent. Collisions with the nuns were the brightest events in the tedious procession of days. They gave zest to the life in that idle and well-fed confinement. And then there came fifty more children from the prison. It became necessary to transfer the nuns to some other place. A large, two-story house was vacated for them across the river, on the outskirts of the town. They were invited to leave. The nuns submitted obediently to the decision of the authorities. They only begged to be accorded the use of the convent church. But secretly, each of them unburdened her sorrow.

Now and then, of a morning, a peasant's cart would stop at a distance from the high convent wall. On some days there were two or three. Shrinking, with a guilty look, muzhiks and peasant women made their way to the convent gate. They spoke beggingly and ingratiatingly to the sentinel, and dived into the little gateway. In the yard they were met by the manifestations of a new and strange activity. The words "comrade," "Dyetdom," "lawbreakers," rang in the air. The old-established convent life was hiding timidly in the depths. Passing by the merry-voiced children and the silent ones with questioning eyes, they proceeded to the little houses in the background. There they

were met by the images of the saints and by high-pitched, meek voices. It was to them, the bearers of secret gifts, that the nuns unburdened their hearts. The Mother Superior signed the papers as follows: Mother Superior of the Nuns' Working Commune, the humble Evstolya. At the meeting in the convent church she admonished the faithful: "All power is from God". But she, too, could not restrain herself. She unburdened her sorrow to a lay acquaintance, Astafiev, who had formerly owned two cinema-theaters, who used to make substantial contributions to the convent, and who was now working at the Trade-union headquarters, but had no thought to forget God.

"They are tearing us away from God's temple."

And tale-bearers ran from house to house, wherever God had not been forgotten.

"The nuns are being evicted!"

"They'll turn the convent into a theater. . . ."

"They're taking the ornaments from the icons. . . ."

"Everything has been removed from the altar to the apartment of the President of the Gubcheka."

"The Mother Superior was tortured at the Cheka."

From the houses the winged tidings spread to the market-place, which was on the square adjoining the convent. On the day set for moving, peasant women, in their carts, crossed themselves. In the excitement, one of them found herself three thousand roubles short in the sum paid her for her cabbage. She was bemoaning her misfortune, mingling her outcries to God with feminine oaths, shrill and incoherent:

"Mother Mary, Queen of Heaven. Ain't there no plague for them . . . he just pushes the money into my hand and off he goes! The damned communist! . . . Sheeny scum! St. Nicholas, our protector. . . . There, they coul'dn't stand the prayers. . . . They're

afraid of them, like the devil of a cross. Our mothers, brides of Jesus . . . where shall they go? Thunder strike them, the fiends, Satan's brood! And there you are. I just turn round a minute—the man was there, and now he ain't. . . . Wait, I won't forget you, you cock-eyed bum! Just show your mug again . . . you damned dog!"

The muzhiks said not a word, but having completed their trading they did not leave the market-place. They moved their horses closer to the convent.

The carts for the nuns were brought up. The big gate was opened. The sentry was placed at the gate. And the news spread quickly, as if by a secret wire. At once crowds began to stream in in motley waves. Mother Evstolya glanced sharply from under her black cowl. She halted at the gate, tall and solemn. She turned deliberately to the icon nailed to the gate. She bowed down to the earth. Peasant women in the crowd began to blubber. To cap the climax the Mother Superior, standing beside her cart, bowed low to the four corners of the earth. Her face is like an old icon. Stern. The nuns followed her like black shadows. They repeated all the movements of the Mother Superior. The black figures, sharply outlined in the blue spring air, awakened a feeling of sadness. A peasant woman rushed to the nuns with a ringing cry:

"Our mothers! Our intercederes! Forgive us, for Christ's sake!"

Another, after her, shouted more shrilly still:

"Oh, where are they taking you to from God's temple?"

A third flung herself under the hoofs of the Mother Superior's horse. She even let go the rooster embraced in her arms.

"Don't hold this against us! Don't complain to God!"

The three raised a clamorous wailing. Scores of piercing female cries responded. At the sound of the lamentations, passers-by came from the streets. A mounted soldier, carrying an official packet, checked his horse in full gallop. He stood stock still, held by curiosity. A woman-peddler, Filatova, abandoned her push-cart loaded with cakes, and rushed to the soldier.

"Why do you mock the Christian faith? God will punish you! . . . Just wait, He'll punish you!"

The crowd stirred, aroused by the shrieks of the women. Men's voices began to rumble:

"We won't let 'em break up the convent!"

"The nuns ain't hurt no one! Whom did they bother?"

The churchwarden, a nimble, gray-haired teacher of the former ecclesiastical school, popped up near the carts. He squawked in a cracked, raucous voice:

"Where is the religious freedom? Where is the religious freedom granted by the government?"

His cry egged on the crowd.

"We ain't got no rights!"

"We'll complain to Lenin!"

"An arbitrary act of the local authorities."

"Infidels! They didn't lodge anybody at the sheeny Synagogue, did they? Sheenies, Christ betrayers!"

"Ah-a! So! They let the mosque and the Roman churches alone! But they lodged the bastards at an Orthodox convent. An Orthodox one—mind you!—no other would do!"

And the "bastards" had already run out of the yard in a noisy crowd. They looked at everybody with wide-open eyes. They were intoxicated with the fun of the scandal. They got into everybody's way, like sense-

less puppies. Grishka forgot all about his yearning and about his wish to escape. His gray eyes shone and his little head rolled gleefully from side to side.

"Great! . . . The women are yellin'; look how red the muzhiks' mugs are! And the nuns are just like black dolls on springs. They're bowin' right and left. They've screwed up their lips."

"Bet they're sore!"

Grishka filled his lungs with air, and full of rebellious challenge, shouted quite close to the Mother Superior:

"Black-tailed pests!"

The peasant women responded in a wild concert:

"He's insulting our mothers, the bastard!"

"He's swearing at our intercessor!"

They would have mauled Grishka badly. But the sentinel grabbed him by the neck and threw him back to the convent wall. The sentinel himself had only just come to his senses. He had been absorbed in watching the scene. Another sentinel also came to himself and shouted toward the yard:

"Telephone for a detachment!"

But the news of the commotion had already spread throughout the town. Mounted men were hastening from all sides.

"Disperse! . . . Disperse! . . ."

"Citizens, those who do not belong to the convent, stand back—back!"

One of the nuns shrieked and threw herself to the ground. A cavalryman rushed toward her:

"Help the Mother to the cart. . . . There, there, take her under the arms. . . . So. . . . Put her down. . . . Citizen Mother Superior, step into the cart, if it pleases you. . . . Give her a lift. Help her up!"

A merry glazier, who was in the thick of the crowd, roared:

"Look! A military cavalier!"

They caught him up quickly:

"He-he! . . . Ha-ha! . . . Even the nuns like the cavaliers! . . ."

"Oh, they don't balk when they're asked for a walk!"

"The damned dogs! They've opened their traps! . . . Oh, our mothers! . . . Our martyrs!"

"He-e-e! Sing us another penny's worth, auntie; I'll give you a Soviet ten-spot. . . ."

"Dirty dogs! Sons of ——!"

"Oh, stop swearing, please. Come away, Manya."

"He-he-he-e! . . . 'Come away, Manya.' . . ."

"Well, well! What a swell! Skirts like bells—pockets both sides! Ladies, dear ladies!"

"Look, look, the nuns are packing their things."

"There they come with bundles, the whores. Poverty-stricken! And look at the coffers they're dragging with them!"

"They found a kettle stuffed with gold in the Mother Superior's cellar."

"A hundred yards of cloth!"

"Look at the martyrs! They're not being put out into the street. They can pray and fast in the other place just as well. Isn't that so, Vasya?"

"As a communist, I approve of the action of the Gubispolcom."

"And I'm not a communist, but in this case I understand them. There's no other place for the children. I can see that."

"Sure; are the kids to croak, or what? *They* want apartments and attendants, but the children are to be left in the gutter."

"And the orphans? . . . Pitch 'em into the river, hey?"

"There, there, disperse. . . . Citizens, citizens! Stand back!"

The nuns lifted their trailing skirts. They hurriedly packed their belongings. They had lost their iconlike air. The crowd stirred and rumbled. The sympathy for the nuns died out, judging by the remarks. Grishka quietly stepped away from the wall and dived into the crowd.

At a depot, once, a muzhik was telling about his life: how much he had had to knock about in many cities. And he said: "Such is my restless star." At the time Grishka laughed with the others, but he did not understand. And now he remembered it and applied it to himself:

"Such is my restless star."

At the moment when the kids, let us suppose, are getting "sanwiches" and tea, Grishka is walking the streets, listening to the rumbling in his stomach. Still, he is not inclined to go back. But an empty maw must have its way. It will stand hunger for a day or two, and then it begins to wear a man out. And the supplies—bing! Used up. There are six of them hiding in the cemetery. Grishka found five youngsters there; they had rifled a Gubnarobraz storeroom and had escaped from the Children's Home. So they spent the nights together at the cemetery. The others had money, and Grishka, too, sold his shirt and trousers. He swapped his Institution coat for an old shabby one. They gave him a little money to boot. Before long they had eaten up all their money. In the daytime they begged on the streets of the town without fear. Who would trouble to search for them? Every day

new kids are brought to the Home. Occasionally they would bump into a bad man who pestered them with questions:

"Who are you? Where from?"

But a good man would pass on his way to whatever place he was bound for. He would not even stop to look!

Today has been a bad day. Grishka stood near the Soviet dining room, but no one gave him a meal ticket. At the children's dining room those who had no cards used to be permitted to devour the leavings on the plates, but today they had driven him off. They were awaiting an Inspector or something. He tried a house:

"Help, for Christ's sake. . . . My father was killed in the war, my mother died of typhus at the hospital."

They threw him out by the scruff of the neck.

"You go and beg of your commissars," they said. "They've been breeding you; let them feed you now."

Grishka wonders:

"How did the commissars come to breed us? It was our fathers and mothers. And they planted us on the commissars. What's the use of talking to those fools! Oh, but I'm hungry! And here's the dining rooms being closed already. Rotten luck!"

To allay his sorrow, Grishka gave a little Bashkir boy, who was standing near the dining room, a crack in the jaw, but the youngster was spirited. He punched Grishka in the belly. Grishka gasped, rested a while, and moved on.

"Comrade . . . something for a piece of bread. . . ."

"Get out of the way. There's a swarm of you these days, may the plague take you all!"

"There he goes, swinging his brief-case! The fat-bellied miser!"

A boy, peddling cigarettes, passes. Grishka approached him:

"How much a dozen?"

"Beat it, you hobo! Them cigarettes ain't for the likes of you." Grishka narrowed his eyes.

"Gee, but you're stuck up! Maybe I've got ten thousand?"

"Like fun you have! Try that gag on someone else. Come on, show me!"

"You don't 'spect me to show 'em to everybody. Maybe I had more'n that."

"Sure, you had, but it swum away. Vamoose! Git! Or I'll smash your mug for you."

"Come on, try it!"

"I will."

"Well, let's see you do it!"

"I will, whad d'ye think?"

They stopped in the middle of the sidewalk, shoving each other. And just then the devil brought a lady from somewhere:

"What is this? Are you peddling, boy?"

And the boy held out a box of cigarettes toward her. Like a fool, he sings out:

"Best quality. How many? A dozen?"

And she takes hold of his arm.

"Come along to militia headquarters. Haven't you read the order about speculation by children? Are you illiterate? Very well, we'll see your parents."

The boy resists and she pulls him along. And Grishka, of course, took to his heels. Almost got into hot water, that time. It's a good thing the woman was green, otherwise she would have nabbed both of them. A hell of a day!

And the day was already drawing to an end. The sky grew sad and gray. Just one merry pink stripe

remained. But there was no warmth in it. People hastened to their homes. The wind began to blow more blusteringly.

Grishka's feet stumble one against the other, but what is he to do? He dragged himself to the cemetery. It is situated between the depot and the town, on an empty lot. It is surrounded by a stone wall, but the gate is not closed. The wind soughs through the trees. And the snow is not quite melted yet. The nights are sometimes very cold. But in their hole in a corner between two walls, it is somewhat warmer. Twice they had ventured to build a fire. But this cannot be done often, or they will be discovered.

Grishka was downcast when he got there, but a joy was awaiting him. The kids had made a haul and had left some food for Grishka. Their hunger satisfied, the girls began to sing in low voices. And the four boys commenced to relate the experiences of the day. They sat in the narrow hiding-place, pressed close to one another. It is crowded, but it is better so. It gives more warmth, and makes the place seem less spooky in the hours of darkness. And usually, a weird spell envelops the cemetery during the night. When the wind goes rustling through the trees, and it is dark—then it is better. But when the moon comes out in the sky and when everything is still and calm—it is more terrible. From far away the barking of dogs is heard. The sounds come from where the living are. But here everything is quiet. A real grave. It feels as if someone were in hiding nearby, covering his mouth with his hand and gazing fixedly. When one peeps out of the hiding-place one sees the moonlit crosses. All the crosses and the monuments stand straight and stiff, as if frozen. They, too, seem to crouch threateningly. The night is dark and windy. From the city the breath of

life is wafted by the wind. Shaggy Vaska, when his hunger is satisfied, is always ready to tell stories. Tonight, too, he begins a yarn. The girls become quiet, and listen.

They had been saying that it happens, at times, that people are buried alive. And this led Vaska to his tale:

"Now, comrades, I'll tell you what happened once. In a town. . . . Well, there was a young lady. . . . A 'igh school, or a calidge gal, I don't know which. . . . So she came home and 'Oh, Oh!' . . . yes . . . 'Oh, papa, oh, mama, I'm dying.' And she flopped on the floor, kickin' her legs. Mother, father, run to her, fuss over her, but she, 'I'm dying, I'm dying!' 'Course they called for the dacter. The dacter came. Well, so and so, Mister Dacter, she wants to die. The dacter started to fix her up. 'Course, *kvass,* choc'late and all that, but she: 'No, no, I'm dying!' Kicked once, twice, and stopped breathin'. 'Course the dacter went away. The mother bawled a bit, and then they put the gal in the coffin. They buried her. In a cemetary, just like here. 'Course she was lying and lyin' there, and then started to squoim and twist. The warden hears her fidgetin'! He listened and listened and then ran to the girl's father and mother. They got some men, opened the grave, but 'course she was dead for the second time. But you could see she'd been fidgetin'. She'd twisted one foot under, just like that. And then the dacter says: she's had a 'listargic' sleep. That's how they printed it in the papers. And then I told my pa and ma: don't bury me till I turn sour and rotten. Ye-es."

The children listened with bated breath. And when he finished, Polka, a fool, whimpered: "I'm scared!"

Grishka remonstrated with her:

"Stop bawling, you fool? Vaska made it all up."

But Vaska asseverates:

"God's truth, bust me eyes if it ain't; it wuz printed in a paper. A 'igh school or a calidge gal, I dunno which."

Petka is the chief; he is only a boy himself, no older than Grishka, but he is strict. He is the chief here. He shouted:

"Keep on bawling, you cow. The sexton will hear you and he'll show you something worse than Vaska's yarn. And you, jabber-jaw, shut your trap!"

Vaska grew angry.

"There! 'Shut your trap!' Did I go and print it in the papers? I'll paste you one in the eye, then yer gonna believe me."

And at that moment, in the forest, "Bang-bang!" The forest began at the very wall of the cemetery.

A hush fell upon the children.

"Shooting," whispered Aniutka.

She spoke low, but there was no fear in her voice. It was not the first time they heard shots.

Grishka, with a knowing air, knitted his brows in the darkness.

"Them are the guys what's gonna be shot. The counter-rev'lutionists."

"And what for?" piped Polka.

Petka replied:

"What a fool! How many times 'ave I told you: it's them who is agin the Soviet rule."

Taciturn Antropka fidgeted:

"I'm scared when they shoot people. It hurts."

And in the forest again: "Bang, bang!" They were silent, listening intently. They were afraid of the dead, but they had no comprehension of death. And they were not terrified by the agony of those who were being shot. Only Antropka trembled. He had seen

war in his native hamlet. His heart shrank into a tight lump. And swallowing his tears, he said in a low, wistful voice:

"They should have put 'em in prison."

Petka spat contemptuously.

"And how 'bout a guy who's a rotten bum, who's killed a lot of people himself? What 'bout him?"

"Put'm in prison."

"He'll run away and murder again."

"Well, put soldiers to watch 'em, then he won't run away. . . ."

"He'll kill the soldiers."

"But if he ain't got no livorvert, he won't kill. . . ."

That's how he cuts Petka short. But Petka thought for a moment, and said:

"You're a fool, Antropka!"

Grishka said nothing, but he thought:

"Do they shut their eyes when they're being shot?"

And suddenly he seemed to see it clearly before him: they do! His heart shuddered, like Antropka's.

The shots ceased. The children waited: will there be more? But none followed. Then came sleep; it closed their eyelids and deadened all thoughts. Only Antropka moaned faintly in his slumber.

In the morning, when the sun began to grow warm, everything became living and joyful. The darkness disappeared and carried gloomy feelings away with it. Behind the cemetery wall the children played at "Gubcheka" and "executions". Petka acted as President of the Gubcheka. He pretended to hold a revolver in one hand and to work a machine-gun with the other. Polka and Aniutka were to be shot to death. Antropka and Grishka were the executioners. Grishka commanded merrily:

"Shut your eyes! Shut your eyes!"

There was neither sacrilege, nor fear, nor anger in the children's ringing cries. In all simplicity they reproduced the life of adults. And the warm sun shone kindly down upon them, as if promising by its caresses that when they would invent a new game, they would forget this one.

It was a jolly day. The anniversary of the Paris Commune was being celebrated. At the children's dining room dinners were to be had without cards. The cemetery dwellers were among the first comers and they had their snack. And then they walked about in the streets with the other people, following red flags. They sang the "International". On the squares, high wooden platforms were draped in red. On the platforms stood communists who waved their arms and shouted something about the Paris Commune. Grishka liked one of them best of all. Big, shaggy, full-throated! You could hear him way off! He runs to and fro on the platform, shakes his mane, and then suddenly bangs the railing with his fist:

"Hats off! I'm going to talk about the martyrs of the Commune!"

Such a mighty, juicy yell! Grishka fastened on the words, and began to yell them in the crowd:

"Hats off! I'm going to talk about the martyrs of the Commune!" He shouted these words into the ears of a peasant woman, and she gave him a resounding slap.

"The pup!—hollerin' without sense! He don't know what the commune is, but he hollers just the same!"

Grishka rubbed the spot where he had caught it, and hastened merrily on. Wha' d'ye mean, he don't know? He knows, all right. Commune is what the communists have, and Paris. . . . Well, there is a city

like that. Somewhere the other side of Moscow. He had heard about it at the Children's Home: "Paris is a great, big town; when you get there your head goes roun' ". Yes, sir, Grishka knows. And again he yelled in boisterous frenzy:

"We have been naught—we shall be all!"*

People stopped again. On a platform a peasant-woman, or a lady, was holding forth in a shrill, piping voice. One could not make out what she was saying, but it was funny to watch her. She's wearing herself out. Grishka mimicked her in falsetto tones: "Te-tee-tee-tee!" and went on. Suddenly a drunkard popped out of the crowd.

He wore a clean coat and a hat with two long ear-flaps tilted sidewise; a red ribbon was stuck to his chest. He was lean, toothless, and cross-eyed. He waves his arms and shouts:

"Comrades, I beg you to overthrow capitalism."

His missus pulls him back by the coat, but he struggles toward the speaker's box:

"I beg you persistently to overthrow capitalism."

Two mounted soldiers rushed toward him and grabbed him under the arms. The crowd roared:

"There, he's overthrown capitalism!"

"Where did he lay in all that booze?" a hoarse, bass voice questioned enviously.

A new joy for Grishka. He flew to the cemetery with the ringing cry:

"Comrades, I beg you to overthrow capitalism!"

One night the cemetery was surrounded. They were looking for some important fugitive, but they found Grishka's commune instead. And in the weird hour before sunrise, stumbling in sleepy stupor, the juvenile lawbreakers dragged themselves along the familiar

*A line from the "International".

road. The weary Red soldiers were swearing, but they did not beat the children.

After a night's imprisonment they were again taken to the Narobraz. There were fifteen of them in all. They were escorted by three militiamen. The oldest of these coughed all the way, spat, and grumbled at the children.

"What kind of men will you grow up to be? Why, here you're only kids and under guard already! You're dung, that's what you are. What the hell did you get born for? Foo! There you, baldy, stop bawling! It's bad enough without that."

But the squint-eyed Bashkir boy did not understand Russian. He was bawling and trying to break away. A freckle-faced militiamen threatened him with his rifle, then caught hold of his long shirt and pulled him along. His Tartar cap fell down into the mud. The senior militiaman picked it up and jammed it sidewise on the Bashkir's head. And the Bashkir kept struggling and yelling. His square-jawed, yellow, little face remained motionless; his cries were squeaky and monotonous:

"Iga kaityrga ty-le-em!" [*I want to go home.*]

The old man grumbled in reply:

"Kaityrga, kaityrga. . . . Sure it's *katorga.** For you and for us. But stop your squawking! If your lot in life is *katorga,* kick, or don't kick—it'll come anyway. You're dung, that's the only name for you. Stop your bawling!"

But the Bashkir kept on bawling. Like a puppy on whom people have trodden in their hurry. Passersby turned to look at the children. A gray-haired gentle-

* The Bashkir word "kaityrga" resembles the Russian word "katorga" meaning penal servitude, or, figuratively, torture.

man, whose coat collar was raised even on that warm day, stopped. He shook his head and remonstrated:

"It's a disgrace! They escort children with rifles. The Chink was beaten, I suppose."

The senior militiaman snapped at him:

"Well, take him along, if you're so kind-hearted! We have to drag them around every day. You pity them, but you won't feed them."

The gentleman was indignant. The children shuffled along wearily.

At the Narobraz, naturally, they were taken to the room set aside for the consideration of juvenile cases. And there a great many children were squatting on the floor. The old clerk has gotten his papers into a jumbled heap. He makes frantic efforts to put them in order, but keeps dropping one after the other on the floor. A young lady, in a carefully crimped coiffure, rummages about in the closet. Another, somewhat older, with glasses on her nose, keeps pulling at the string of her eyeglasses and she grows hot under the collar:

"I'll send them all to the Gubispolcom. Let them do what they please with 'em! What kind of. . . ."

And the door opens and more children are brought in. Every variety of children. Some in government outfits, some in underwear and in all sorts of makeshifts for clothing.

Grishka's group was sent to the Sheltering Home. But there they were told:

"We won't take them. There is no room."

They were brought back. The senior militiaman spat and walked away. The two others rolled cigarettes and squatted on the floor to rest. Grishka was beginning to feel dizzy. It was due to hunger and the close air of the room. But most of all it came

from his yearning. He sat on the floor, staring with dull eyes at the ceiling, his lips tightly pressed together. His face became sad and old.

A clean-shaven, long-nosed, thin-lipped man entered the room. His peaked head was covered with a cap pulled low over his eyes. His tread was firm, as if he were pressing hard against the earth with each step he took. And his shoes were in utter ruin and looked like the paws of some animal. He came in and flopped into a chair. And the chair, too, seemed to press down into the floor.

"Well? Fussing as usual? Always papers and papers! You ought to chuck all those papers into the fire. And you, Bashkurdistan, what are you howling about? Do you want autonomy?"

He screwed up his narrow eyes and contorted his thin lips. He laughed at everything. As he spoke, he kept rubbing his palms together, hunching his back and stroking his thighs down to the knees. He was all agog. Not for a moment did he sit still. His every joint seemed to demand movement and work.

"Wait, Comrade Martynov," piteously besought the older of the two young ladies. "You're always clamoring. You make my head spin. Where can we put them?"

"To clean the toilets, to dig the ground. . . . Where? We'll find a place. Hey, you, Bashkir *arba,** how long are you going to keep up that squeaking?" And he mimicked the Bashkir to the life:

"Ee-ghi-ghi-ghi. . . ."

The Bashkir's eyes suddenly became dry. His lips stretched into a smile. And he stopped his squeaky wailing.

"Well, young ladies, how goes it? Papers and pa-

* A primitive cart used by Bashkirs, a very creaky conveyance.

pers? According to the instructions, with questionnaires?"

And again he rubbed his palms together.

"I'll take ten of these rascals from you. I can take ten."

"That's good, Comrade Martynov," the same young lady said joyously. "We'll pick them out for you in a minute. There are some here whose cases have been settled."

"I'll pick them out myself. I have a questionnaire of my own."

And he turned round in his chair toward the children. He rested his eyes on a tall, blond boy.

"Hey you, blondy! Are you a good hand at stealing?"

The boy colored and fidgeted:

"They took me for nothing at all. It was Petka Pyatkov who stole, and I . . ."

"You're a good hand at lying. Fond of fighting? With fists or with a knife?"

"No, I never fight."

"You don't? Fool! And you, what makes your face so green?"

This to Grishka.

Grishka eyed him as he sat squirming in his chair and rubbing his palms one against the other with a rapid motion, and Grishka laughed, and remembered:

"I seen a squoimin' monkey at the zoo. Very much alike. And he had long arms and made funny faces."

"What's the laughing about? Why is your phiz so green?"

Grishka sniffled and replied:

"You'd turn green yourself. Nothing to eat all day!"

"Aren't you used to going without grub?"

"You try with all your might to get used to it, but the belly aches just the same."

"Did you run away from jail?"

"No, not from jail. I'm a juv'nile. I ran away from a convent."

"So they've tried to convert you, hey? They don't call it a convent, buddy, but a Med-i-co-ped-a-go-gi-cal Institution. They're great for names, the sons of——. But why did you run away?"

"Just because. I didn't like it there."

The young lady who had spoken before took on a knowing look and said:

"Mental defective. The category of vagabonds, apparently."

"There, now; they've found a label for you. They're smart! And what's your name?"

"Peskov, Grigori."

"So-o. Well, Grigori Peskov, you say you were never in prison?"

"Sure I was! More'n oncet. But it ain't supposed to be jail now. They've formed the juv'nile lawbreakers now."

Martynov burst out laughing, but not loudly, from within so to say, and his face became human and not like the face of a monkey.

"Do you hear, Comrade Shidlovskaya, they've formed the lawbreakers? Ha-ha-ha! Will you clean toilets?"

"There's a rotten smell in 'em. But I will, if I got to."

"Good. You'll go with me."

"Where?"

"You'll see."

"If I don't like it, I'll run away. I'll run away 'spite of the sentry."

Grishka threw out the angry challenge.

"We have no sentry. Run all you like. And if you won't do we'll throw you out. A kick in the behind! We don't want any trash. I'll take this one."

And smilingly he began to question the other children. He would not take any who were quiet and soft. He selected three girls, six Russian boys, and the squeaking Bashkir.

"Be at the depot in three days, and tomorrow wait for me here. We'll find some rags to put on you."

"But they must be put up somewhere for the three days, Comrade Martynov. They can't be left like this, without supervision."

"Sure! We'll get a French governess for them. *Parlez français,* Grigori Peskov!"

The children laughed—almost all of them. Even the Bashkir. For Martynov had made a face that was particularly funny.

"You're always up to jokes, Comrade Martynov. This is really annoying. You do not realize that they are all mental defectives. . . ."

"Sure, I understand. Narcompros has it all explained in the instructions. They should be fed, young lady, and sent to work, to dig up stones! Well, now. Those that I picked out, come with me to get supplies!"

"But listen; this is a disgrace! We must, at least, make a list of names, then find out where they are to be put up for the three days, then call for the guards to escort them to the place."

"As for the list, do what you please if you are so fond of writing. But there is no need of guards. I'll take them to my room. Come on, let's get the supplies!"

"But they will all run away from you."

"They'll be fools if they do. They'll land in your

medico-pedagogical convent again. Make out the list. Wait, kids, I'll come for you soon; I'll go to see about the supplies."

He brushed Grishka's head with his hand in passing, and was gone. Grishka, for some reason, felt joyous. The long hand had touched his head so kindly. And Grishka thought:

"He's all to the mustard! A good muzhik!"

Not a single one of the ten ran away. Not only for three days, but for a whole week did the children live in Martynov's little room, to the great grief of the landlady. But they heard her lamentings only on the first day, when they came home early in the evening. But on the other days they arrived late. Just in time for sleep. For days Martynov made them hustle from place to place in the town to gather supplies. In one place he would get utensils, in another some cloth for garments, in a third a few bags of groats. Then they loaded a train-caboose high with boxes.

They went with the driver Nikolai to the pasture to get some cows. Like a thrifty proprietor, Martynov gathered supplies from everywhere for his colony. He managed to penetrate into all the storerooms closed to others. At the office of the President of the Gubcheka he took a clock from the wall, in order to give the children more than was allotted them. And all the time he kept rubbing his palms one against the other. He laughed at everybody. He shouted at the children:

"Hey, you, rascals, what's all this loafing? Keep moving, keep moving. Bashkurdistan, go help Nikolai carry the water! It's time to water the cattle."

And the little Bashkir understood the Russian speech by the expressive gestures. He rushed to the yard with a guttural cry.

Grishka felt new life in him. Best of all—it is so

jolly. There are so many people one sees every day.

The earth is drying. The sweet scent of spring rises from the trees. The sun has grown more kindly. It warms one almost all day long. When a shower falls, it is a joyous one. It merely washes everything clean and lets the sun dry everything again.

It is so easy to run about. On the very first day, when they left the Narobraz, Martynov took all the children to the barber shop. Their heads were shaved. Even the girls. Then he sent them to the bathhouse and had them dressed in short knickers. The girls as well. It is strange! But never mind, they got used to them. The garments are light. They make one want to skip and jump in spite of oneself. Knickers to the knees, shirts without collars or sleeves.

The trip to the colony was, for Grishka, like the first fairy dream.

They occupied two cabooses. A number of lean cows and horses rode with them. During the stops they cleaned the stalls and brought water. Spreading his legs far apart, Martynov pumped water. He issued commands to the kids. When the train was in motion he talked with the children about themselves. He did not question them, but they themselves eagerly told him everything. To Grishka he said:

"You have no parents—that is good, buddy. Parents are trash. The mother throws her skirts over her son and the son turns out a good-for-nothing. They gave you birth, and that is enough. Now you must live on your own hook."

"Yes, and the militiaman said: 'You're like dung.' "

"Dung is all right. We get good crops from dung. There now, lads, we'll milk the cows at this stop. We'll drink milk. Milk is good!"

He would not eat meat, and laughed at the kids.

"Eating bow-wow again? Gobble away, gobble away!"

Grishka howled in delight.

"This is beef, not dog meat."

"It's all the same. Any way you call it—it's Fido. But milk is good, friends. Very good!"

Martynov took charge of one caboose, the driver Nikolai of the other. That was all the guard they had. The children were grouped in shifts. First one, then the other shift went with Martynov. They themselves established the turns who was to go with whom at each stop. They reclined on the fragrant hay. They sang songs, whatever ones they knew and felt like singing. The little Bashkir's song turned out to be the best. The words were incomprehensible—who could remember them? But it sounded like:

"Ai dyn bindy dyndy bindy.
Ai dyn bindy dyndy bindy."

Strange! He sang it five times. The kids asked him to. He closed his eyes, crossed his feet under him, swayed, and sang. Fine! Grishka was ready to hear it five times more.

The free, scent-laden wind of the steppes burst into the wide open door of the caboose. And it brought boisterous joy with it. Grishka poured out his joy to the steppes in shouts, screams, and leapings. It is for him that this train is rushing along. It is for him the engine bellows. For the first time in his life he felt this—all is Grishka's, all is for him!

And he shouted through the open door with full lungs:

"Uh-gu-gu-gu-gu! . . ."

In the evening, when it turned cool and one wished to be quiet, they drank milk. Fresh, warm milk. Of their own milking. What milk it was! But is it pos-

sible to tell about it? Is it possible to tell about the first fairy dream? Can one tell how—doing it all themselves—they led the horses out of the cars, how they hitched them to the wagons? How they went through the strange forest in the dead of night? And the forest embraced them with a sweet, weird spell. Like in a fairy tale!

Grishka loudly questioned the mountains across the lake:

"How are you? Hello-o-o!"

The mountains answered:

"'Ello-o-o!"

Grishka laughed:

"How's that! The rocks are talking!"

And once more filling his lungs with air he yelled:

"Is the boss home?"

"... 'Ome!"

"They call this ech-o. Ve-ry nice!"

Everything here trembles with living nerves. Everything responds to Grishka's call. It isn't like in the city. There dogs bark, but on the sly they try to bite. And the houses will not reëcho human voices.

It is joyous to stand on a rock. The sun has not yet grown hot, but the rock is warm. It has not lost yesterday's warmth during the night.

The waves are advancing upon the rock with a monotonous refrain:

"Ou-ou-ou-kh ... ou-ou-ou ... ou-kh."

A big one swells up and rolls on boastfully. And covers the voices of all the little ones and sings out:

"Ou-oukh-khou-khou-ou-ou! ..."

And it splashes over Grishka's bare feet. They are all scratched from the stones and bushes. It hurts a bit when the sun dries them. But it feels good.

"Come, mother water, wash 'em off."

Off with the knickers. On hot days the boys wear no shirts. Straight into the water. The waves envelop him, embrace him, and again he wants to shout. He wants to talk with the waves, the sky, the forest, the hills, the birds, beasts, and men.

"Ho-ho-ho-ho!"

And boyish voices respond from the hill:

"Pes-ko-ov! Gri-sha-ka, yelling de-vil!"

And three of them, bare to the waist, in short knickers, rush down the hill. With their feet they make stones roll down the steep slope. At the head runs Taichinov, the little Bashkir with whom Grishka had come to the colony.

His head is bent to one side and he neighs like a horse of the steppes. Then, with a leap as light as that of a wild beast, he jumps down to the shore near Grishka.

"Must-a blow horn soon! What for come first? No work, no eat."

"Ain't I workin'? You naggin' Mahomet! I was ahead o' you all carryin' water and measurin' milk. You ain't got your eyes open yet!"

"O-right, o-right. Come on, dive head, wanta see."

And he is already in the water and squealing joyfully. Grishka obediently ran out on the sand, balanced himself on his hands, head down, adroitly turned a somersault in the air, and splashed into the water head first.

Taichinov is beside himself with delight.

"Dive head! Dive! Oui-oui-oui! . . ."

The blue-eyed Pole, Woicechovsky, also "dived head". His white, seemingly frail, but strong little body glistened in the air.

Strong, broad-shouldered, Ukrainian Nadtochi was

snorting stolidly in the water, and suddenly he roared in a deep bass:

"Oho-ho-ho! Some lake! A lake of lakes!"

The lake is good. Now it is blue and joyous. And it roars angrily in the mornings, spluttering with white foam. And grows gray. And it is always rumbling. It can rival the sea with its noise. When it is calm one may look down to the very bottom and see all the life in it. One day a number of men came with instruments. They measured the lake up and down. They took the kids, in turn, into their boat. These men spoke in a learned way: the water in this lake is radioactive. The children proudly communicated the fact to one another:

"The water in our lake is radioactive."

A big lake. As one comes out upon it from the forest, one feels free and easy at once. The shores bristle with high, wooded mountains. Right up to the clouds. But they do not crowd the lake. Free and clear it undulates in the mountain wilderness. And the forest rejoices because of the lake. The birches bow down to it. Pines and firs send it their balsamy fragrance. Summer bungalows hide in the woods. And some come out almost to the very shore. There are seven bungalows on the steep bank. This is the children's colony. It stands apart from the village and from the other bungalows.

The colonists' little dock is a cheerful sight. Four boats are rocking at the wharf. And the best of them all is the white sailboat, "Diana". On a canvas stretched between two high poles is a bold inscription:

"Work and knowledge conquer the elements."

Grishka liked this inscription. Whenever he approached the wharf in a boat he always read aloud:

". . . conquer the elements." Get that?

And what a word, "elements"! You can't explain what it is, but when you hear it you have the desire to be a mighty hero. The lake, too, is one of the elements. That is why it rumbles so.

The entire shore at the edge of water is adorned with a piebald border of round, gray-and-white stones and golden sand glittering in the sun. In one place a big old stump peeps out of the forest. The children painted on it the head of an old man in a red hat. In many colors. And now the stump looks like the living face of an old man. Only, he does not shake his white beard. Otherwise he is quite alive! There, he is staring from the shore!

And on the steep bank, like a beast of the woods, only without fur, appears Martynov, barefoot. He, too, wears short trousers like the children, and a thin, sleeveless shirt. He advances, crushing the stones into the earth. His voice comes rumbling from afar:

"Hey, you! Swarthy International! Have you had your ducking? It's time to wake the rest. Quick! I want it done quick—*khny!*"

The four boys responded in different tones:

"*Khny!* . . . *Khny!* . . . *Khny!* . . . Sergei Mikhalych, *khny!* . . ."

No one in the colony knew the meaning of this word. But to Martynov it meant everything. *Khny*—good, *khny*—bad, *khny*—quickly and nimbly. Whatever you wish. It was only at the colony that Grishka heard him use this word. He did not utter it in the city. It was Martynov's password—for here only. A family word.

In the race, Grishka was the first to reach the kitchen. Today Grishka's squad is on duty. Eight children. Four girls are now at the porch-table, apportioning the bread. Uh, what a dinner there will be today. The

day before they had agreed to cook manna groats in a new way. With pumpkins. The children themselves decided upon the dinner and cooked it themselves. Squads on duty competed every day,—who would turn out the best dinner? But they did not know, as yet, how to bake bread. They had a woman baker. But everything else they did themselves. Look, what a pile of wood is prepared for the day! They chopped it last night. Grishka had worked quickly and nimbly. Martynov noticed it, made a grimace, rubbed his hands:

"Aha, Peskov, *khny!*"

And all evening Grishka was happy in that praise.

Well, everything is ready now. Milk, hot water. The girls have placed around the portions of bread.

And the horn sings out melodiously but commandingly:

"Tu-ru-ru-turu-ru-turu!"

The shore soon became crowded with children. All kinds of voices, all sorts of heads, blue-eyed, black-eyed, all kinds. Splashing, tumbling, spluttering. The boys hemmed and shouted in their bathing place. The girls were bathing at the landing. They screeched in high, shrill voices. They were short-haired, and jumped about nimbly. They looked like boys.

The horn sang out for the second time.

The noise from the lake rolled toward the bungalows. The white middy-blouses of girls flashed by. The naked torsos of boys glistened in the sun. All rushed to the porch dining-room, as if about to storm a fort.

The voice of a little, dark-haired girl rang out in the crowd:

"Monitors, come for tea."

Grishka, clad in a gray kitchen-coat, shouted from the porch:

"Hey, hey! I made up a rhyme. List-en:

The horn blows gay-ly,
Calling to tea."

Nadtochi growled in reply:

"Not tea, but coffee. . . ."

And there, right on the spot, is Martynov. He made a face and sang out in basso profundo, like a deacon:

"Don't give me tea to swill, my maw with coffee fill. Noble lords, won't you have some coffee?"

A roar of laughter drowned everything. And Martynov is already in the yard near the barn.

"Who scattered the bridles about? *Khny!* Hey, you gapers, there are no servants around here. Petrukha Fedyakhin, were you on night watch over the horses? Who else? You took 'em out for racing again!"

He spread his legs and seemed to grow into the ground near the barn. The farm-manager standing next to him pursed his thin lips, complaining:

"That's the result of your not letting me hire some drivers. Nikolai is away most of the time. And what kind of farmers are these? They'll do for all the cattle. They're workers in name only."

"Ah, what's a worker? They'll learn. Peskov, why do you gallop like a stallion with that boiling-hot water? Don't you see the pot's splashing over? *Khny!*"

It was because Peskov had noticed Anna Sergeevna. She enters, tall, white, quiet. She puckers one corner of her mouth at the children. That is her smile.

Grishka had never before loved anybody or anything. Things and people had all been one to him. But at the colony he learned to love everybody. And

Anna Sergeevna more than all. She is like sunshine. The mountains, the lake, the woods—all very well! But the sun is better than all of them. Why is she sunshine? Because. Grishka did not know. Only, when he looked at her everything around grew still more beautiful. When they were on duty together, he would follow her, carrying the pail of slops like an icon. Martynov noticed it twice. He hemmed:

"He's growing, the rascal," he said to himself, and added *"khny"*, angrily.

But later he understood it better. Spring has come for Grishka, healthy, pure. His eyes are clear, unclouded. All the scaly crust of the former wanderings has dropped off. Not a trace of it. He is wholesome. Martynov brightened.

"Grigori Peskov, *khny!*"

He watched the others too, keenly. There were some tender glances exchanged with the girls. The kids teased Lysiaev and big Niura, but there was no premature, lustful desire. The boys were used to the girls. Their touch did not burn. There was nothing of what frequently happened in the cities at the Children's Homes. Martynov was not without wonder.

"There, you see, Mother Nature and work! They're cured. And what a crust of dirt the city had plastered over these children. But they've washed it off. They are now growing healthily, as it should be."

He made one of his grimaces, slapped his thighs, and finished with the thought:

"They'll give a good offspring in due time."

The broad porch is humming with life. The whole colony is here: the children, the supervisors, the coachman, the baker, the laundress, and the seamstress. It is difficult to spy the grown-ups. There are only nine of them at the colony, and a hundred children.

After tea they formed into little groups and scattered in various directions. One squad went to the woods to gather mushrooms against the winter. The horse walked slowly along the road dragging a wagon. Children tumbled about in the grass. A Tartar boy, slender, lithe, stately as a young pine, walked ahead, pointing the way to the best places for mushrooms. There is no "hiker" like him in the colony. He knows all parts of the woods. Once, they had gone to camp in the woods seven versts away, but had forgotten to take blankets with them. He had run back and brought the blankets. And after that, for a whole day, he had skipped tirelessly after the hunters. And now, too, he walked as if he had wings on his back to help him. Suddenly he stopped and shouted:

"Here's the spot! Come on!"

So they set to work.

Another squad went away, singing, in a boat. They were going to the opposite shore to gather bright-red sorb-apples. They must be gathered for drying before they are spoiled by the early frosts. The lake is plashing at the shore, but not a ripple in the middle. What a day!

Grishka is in a third squad. The biggest boys—they started out, singing, for a farm about three versts away. Martynov with them. He had won his fight for a new farm for his colony. A whole estate. Construction-work was going on there. The colonists built barns, dug holes, carted lumber, carried stones, broke stones with picks. They worked stubbornly.

They hurt their feet to bleeding at their work, but their joy was not extinguished by pain. Martynov planned to build a hot-house there for the winter.

They taunted him at the Narobraz:

"Maybe you're planning electrification of your colony?"

He smiled, rubbed his hands, and said firmly:

"I am. I shall install a dynamo by the winter."

They all laughed at him. But he actually brought the dynamo from the city.

At the Narobraz they said in astonishment:

"He's a marvel, that fellow!"

And the children said:

"Martynov is—*khny!*"

And when Martynov would start to tell how their colony would spread light all around, how it would scatter three, ten, twenty such colonies all around, the children believed him. And they laughed in a new way. Laughed for joy, as one laughs when overwhelmed with breathless delight.

Grishka thought:

"I've seen all kinds of people, but never a man like him. He's a brick!"

There were all sorts of children at the colony. Some taken from poor parents. Some from the mines. Children from orphan asylums. And lawbreakers, like Grishka. The only ones Martynov turned down were weak and sickly children.

"Sentimentality! The earth must be cleared. Let the sick die. When there is but one piece—give it to the healthy. Make way for the healthy! If he's a thief or a crook—send him here. If he has a sound body he'll straighten out."

But not all of them could be straightened out. In some the rot stuck stubbornly deep inside. They languished in the atmosphere of constant toil. They lagged at their work and sulked afterwards. Martynov would make a face and send them back to the city.

He sent back many supervisors too.

"You go and write instructions; that's what you're fit for."

Once a pretty, white-faced young lady came. She wanted to teach the children drawing. She did nothing but draw flowers and tie kerchiefs round her head in various ways. Once, after a bath, she tied her kerchief in the style of an icon.

When Grishka saw this, he sang out loud:

"Holy Virgin rejoice!"

So they nicknamed her 'Holy Virgin'. And when she dressed like the other supervisors, in short knickers and a blouse, she wore a golden chain with a trinket dangling from her neck, and a bracelet on her wrist. The children were amused. When they planned to set off on an expedition to some place more distant than usual, she kept asking:

"Won't it rain?"

Taichinov squeaked:

"Oh-o. . . . Scared! Melt-away!"

She could not walk far. She would cave in. On one occasion she became exhausted and asked the kids to carry her. Did it upset them? They joined hands and lifted her up. And she kept scattering smiles in all directions, like presents.

Martynov saw this and roared:

"Nikolai! Tomorrow morning you will drive Klavdya Petrovna to the station. She is urgently needed in the city."

And so she was hurried away from the colony.

Until dinner time, work was carried on at various places. After dinner—at the colony. Some washed their clothes, some tidied up the yard, some helped the carpenter. Having finished the work they went to the library. They read books. But there were few who

read. The books did not attract them. The printed words still seemed dead. But they liked to look at the pictures. They had bitter contests at checkers and chess. In the evening, till dark, they played on the clearing before the House of Culture. That was the name given to the bungalow where the library and the meeting-hall were located. They played basket-ball, cricket, the game of "pegs". After supper they sang songs. Sometimes they listened to stories. Once in a while they danced. They sang Grishka's favorite "International" and Russian folk-songs.

One of the supervisors had a good voice. And so did Big Niura. How they sang! It gave Grishka a tickly sensation in the throat and made shivers run down his spine. As for the stories, some were good, others not so good. Nobody was compelled to listen. One story Grishka liked best of all. It was about a whole nation of people who were driven by hunger to seek new places. They settled among big mountains. They had one archer. He shot an apple off his son's head. William Tell was his name. Uh, fine! "If I hadn't shot it off," he said, "I had another arrow ready for you." This to the governor, who was like a Tsar there.

And it seemed to Grishka that all this had happened among the mountains of their colony. And here is the very lake. . . . Everything is the same. At times they read to them from books. The story about Taras Bulba was fine.

But Grishka himself, like the majority of the children, did not like to read. Active life overshadowed the book. The time after supper flew by like a minute. And though the days exhausted them, yet when Martynov shouted, "Sleep, sleep!"—they were loath to go. But Martynov, smiling and rubbing his hands,

elbowed everybody out of the House of Culture. They scattered to their bungalows and sank at once upon their beds. And sleep descended straightway. A gentle sleep, without sad visions. In the first days at the colony the boys would carry on at bed-time. But before long Grishka noticed that this had stopped. The fact is—they hardly had time to sit down during the entire day. So the bed would calm them at once.

And the summer keeps stringing day upon day, as upon a thread. And the end of the thread is coming soon. The sun began to give way. It seemed to be weakening. It still gave warmth—but only for a short time each day, and then hid away to rest. Gossamers began to quiver among the trees. The leaves began to turn to gold before their death.

There were all kinds of rumors about Martynov's colony. Some came from the city to inspect it. They disapproved.

One commission said:

"There is not enough educational work. Too much exacting physical labor. It is harmful at this age."

Martynov twitched all over, rubbed his hands, and laughed:

"And you would like just to pose for a picture of you at work, and then quit? Then better keep away from us. We've got our own education here. When winter comes, then they'll sit down to books. There's no time for it now. We must work in order not to 'croak' in the winter-time. You'll shut down the Children's Homes in winter, but we'll survive. Did you see any sick in my place? *Khny!*"

An angular, red-haired woman came from Moscow. She had been sent to be fed up a bit, and, at the same time, on business. She snooped about, and her lips tightened grimly:

"There are some morally defective children here. There is no special work being done with them."

Martynov slapped his thighs and laughed again:

"Write a book about it. We can use it for toilet-paper."

And suddenly he grew ferocious:

"I brought thieves from the city. Where are our locks? Only on the store-rooms. And who have the keys? Those very same thieves. What's been stolen? Neither the gate nor the doors are ever locked. The only watchman is that pup-dog, Mikhriutka. There's a lawbreaker, Grigori Peskov. He's been all over Siberia. He's learned the whole dictionary of curses. And look at him now. Why, right now he could be safely sent even to your cess-pool of a city. I have many lawbreakers here. But point them out to me! Go to it. Well then! *Khny!*"

The Moscow lady shrugged her shoulders.

"You are very rude to the parents. The poor mothers come to see their children and you drive them off the very first day."

He slapped his thighs and agreed cheerfully:

"That's true enough. I don't like mothers! They make a mess of things. And the kids have no time for all that messing. Besides, the kids themselves don't like to be with them. 'Oh, mama dear,' 'Oh, my sonny.' That's all well and good, comrade madam, when one lives like a parasite. But now one must seek salvation in work. *Khny!*"

The Moscow lady drew her lips tighter still and departed. They were about to inveigle her into working, too.

About half a mile from the colony the bungalows were occupied by the Zdravotdyel. A health resort. Soviet employees were sent there for rest and recuper-

ation. Ladies gathered fat there. Occasionally they came with their cavaliers to take a walk through the colony. Martynov let it pass once, twice. But at last he jumped out of the kitchen, wearing his white apron and armed with a ladle. He was on duty that day. And he began to tell them where they came off:

"What do you think this is? A boulevard? Wouldn't you like to wash some dishes, madam? No? Then step to the gate, please. Beat it! This is no place for mooning. All right, complain! Send a telegram to the Sovnarcom. *Khny!*"

They were very eager to find the gate quickly.

That led the children to draw a picture. The trellised fence of the colony. On the fence near the gate, Martynov, represented as a bear, is roaring. Down below stands Mikhriutka, barking. And the inscription:

Won't it suit you if you found
Some other place for strollin' round? *

Martynov himself is always on the go. He does not read books and does not tell stories. He has no time. He would get things going at the colony, and then, off to the city, for flour. Then he sees to the lumber for the colony. He brings everything to his ant-hill. The stove-builders demanded air-tight dampers for the stoves. The colony was getting ready for the winter. The dampers are not to be had. So he took Nikolai with him and carried off the dampers from the empty bungalows of the Zdravotdyel. The health-resort authorities complained to the district headquarters: "The bungalows are empty, but

* A couplet from A. S. Griboyedov's popular play, "Woes from Being Too Wise."

they are going to be repaired, and he stole our dampers." The Zdravotdyel had been a whole year planning these repairs.

Martynov received a document from the city.

"Khny!"

And he tore the paper to pieces. What is to be done with him?

The fall had spun its thread half-way. The birches shed their leaves. The forest grew stern and gloomy. The sky frowned, weeping bitterly with continuous rain. The lake was no longer blue. It had turned black, and it beat, roaring, against the shore. The birds flew away. A wolf was seen in the field. At the bungalows the stoves were fired. The boys put on long trousers, the girls skirts. The health-resort became deserted. An angry wind blew from the hills, whistling through the empty bungalows. It tugged irefully at the roofs of the colony. It tried to tear them off.

And it was not merely rain and fog that came with the fall. Hunger, too, approached nearer to the colony. Martynov returned from the city, weary and cross. His *"khny"* no longer caressed; it menaced.

At the meeting he told the children:

"The flour we now have on hand must last us a month."

The House Committee took stock and determined the ration: three quarters of a pound of bread per day. Meat disappeared. Fish from the lake was a help. But it was hard sledding for the children. The work was hard. They plowed the fields. There was not enough ground for sowing. They pulled out the stumps in the woods. They did the last of the farm work. A technician came to install electricity. In their joy they forgot their fatigue.

Grishka had recently heard about America, and now his eyes shone:

"Comrades, we have a new land at the farm. This is America. And the old colony is Europe. Ain't that bully?"

And the kids took up the cry:

"Come on to Europe! Who sleeps in America tonight? Whose turn is it?"

Squads took turns in staying up nights with the electrician. In the evenings they stitched quilts. The boys and the girls—all of them. They had to hurry, the cotton wadding had only just come. One more seamstress was brought from the city. But the seamstresses were busy making clothes.

And the wind from the mountains grew more and more ferocious. It beat with angry howling against the windows; it howled in the chimneys. The stoves grew cold in no time. A lot of wood must be prepared and carried in. It will be impossible to struggle through when the snowdrifts come.

Near the colony there was a village. It was in a bad way. The people had not had enough bread even in summer. They fed on berries, mushrooms, potatoes. But the potato crop failed. They began adding bark to the bread. Hungry children would come in gangs to the colony. Like sparrows after crumbs. There was a Children's Home in the village. The children were starving there. Even in summer they were worse off than those at the colony, and now death stared them in the face. Boys from the Children's Home were caught in the yard of the health-resort manager. They had stolen some meat.

Martynov told the colonists about this.

Grishka trembled. His eyes grew dark, and he began to beg:

"Take them in, in our colony!"

The meeting decided to regard the village Children's Home as a branch of the colony. Bread was to be apportioned to them also. It amounted to half a pound for each child. They were not very good farmers as yet. The food they had stored up during the summer was soon eaten up. Very few mushrooms were left. The potatoes had been dug up late. Half was stolen by the villagers. The vegetable-garden produced but little. And from the city—nothing! The groats were giving out. The children's cheeks faded and began to grow hollow. They felt weariness, and went to bed earlier. But laughter was still heard, and not infrequently.

Martynov was still smiling and commanding:

"Tighten your belts! Lace your bags! *Khny!*"

But he made faces less frequently, and went often to the railway station. One night the lake grew stormy. It beat against the rocks with a mournful pounding. Then suddenly it burst into a rage and thundered:

"Ou-oukh . . . Ou-oukh . . . Ou-fkh!"

The wind shook the walls. It tried to break them down. It howled in the chimney—*whi-whi-whoo-whoo!* When it died down, a different howling was heard. Wolves, or hungry dogs? The electricity was not yet installed. Gloomy night clung to the window-panes and enveloped the bungalows in a weird darkness. The children could not fall asleep. Conversation broke off and trailed into silence. They listened to the creaking of the walls and to the roaring of the lake. It seemed to be trying to tear the mountains asunder. And it was hurling curses in all directions.

Grishka shook his head:

"Elements."

But he no longer thought of becoming a mighty

hero. The whole colony seemed to him small and fragile. And forsaken by all. They are alone in the mountains. And somebody behind the wall is weeping, menacing, and howling funeral dirges. Why are they all in so eery a mood tonight? Taichinov said wistfully:

"Death walkin' round."

The vestibule-door banged. They were startled. Woicechovsky cried out in fright. But the sound of heavy steps calmed them.

Grishka exclaimed joyfully:

"Sergei Mikhalych?"

"It's me!"

And Martynov entered the dormitory. Grishka slept near the door. Martynov sat down heavily on his bed.

"Well, you are not asleep yet? Still chatting? *Khny!*"

Grishka's uncanny mood disappeared. And the other boys, too, stirred joyfully.

"We'll be asleep in a minute. I, Peskov, promise for all. We'll be asleep in a minute!"

And Martynov said wearily:

"Business is rotten, Grigori Peskov. Business is—*khny!*"

"What's the matter?"

Taichinov jumped from his bed and ran up to Martynov. The others were in commotion.

"A telegram from the Gubono. They order me to take you all to the city, to the Children's Homes. They won't give us any supplies. And we ourselves —*khny!* We won't be able to hold out."

Grishka flared up angrily:

"Sergei Mikhalych, I'll croak here, but I won't go. No wonder I felt so blue today!"

He shook all over and hid his head in Martynov's lap. Martynov never embraced or kissed the children. When he saw girls hugging each other he grumbled:

"Sentiment!"

But now he pressed Grishka close to him and the boy's trembling seemed to pass over into him. He twitched restlessly on the bed. The children clamored:

"Why to the city? Let's die here!"

"We'll eat bark!"

"And what can they give us there?"

"Get away, Vaska! Here the colony's goin' to pieces, and he wants to fight me!"

"Sergei Mikhalych, don't let them do it!"

And in many voices they shouted:

"We'll stay here! We won't go anywhere!"

"Ye-es, friends. . . . The girls too. They cried, but they said the same thing. We must think it over. *Khny!* You know yourselves—the work is hard, and there is very little food. We won't die, but we'll be worn out."

Nadtochi spoke up in a reassuring bass:

"Won't we be able to hold out till the new crop? Sure we will. We've got our own bread."

Grishka clung to Martynov's hand.

"Sergei Mikhalych, I promise to eat every other day. May thunder strike me if I eat every day!"

And suddenly all the childish tones faded out of his voice. As if he had become fully grown all at once, he dragged out the words in deep agony:

"Don't give us up to be lawbreakers again!"

Martynov looked him straight in the eyes, and did not see, but rather felt in them a terrible, human sorrow. He shuddered, grimaced, rubbed his hands, and said:

"I won't."

THE 'MERICAN

A MUZHIK, WITH BANDAGED HEAD, DROVE HIS PIEbald horse wildly along the lane. His body was glued to the flat back of the horse; his face twitched, his fists were swinging in the air; gleeful yells issued from his throat:

"Brothers—we've caught—a 'Merican!"

Okorok shouted:

"Oh-ho-ho!"

Three muzhiks, carying rifles, appeared in the lane.

Behind them, walking with a slight limp, was an American soldier, dressed in a khaki uniform.

His face was young and clean-shaven; his parted lips showed his teeth chattering from fear; on his right cheek, close to the cheek-bone, a muscle was trembling.

A lanky, gray-haired muzhik, who was escorting the American, asked:

"Who's chief here?"

Vershinin spoke up: "What's the matter?"

"He's the chief—him!" shouted Okorok. "Nikita Yegorich Vershinin. Come, tell us how they got him!"

The muzhik spat to one side, and patting the American soldier on the back, as if he had come of his own will, began to tell the story with the garrulous eagerness of an old man:

"I've brought him to you, Nikita Yegorich. We're from Voznesenski county. Our band has been following the Japs a long, long way."

"And what village are you from?"

"Ours is a town. The small town of Penino,—you've heard of it, maybe?"

"They say it was burned down."

"The damned dogs! They burned the whole place right down, little father, so we all took to the hills!"

The muzhiks came closer, saying:

"Sure! The same evil had come to us all!"

The gray-haired muzhik continued:

"There were two of them, the 'Mericans! They were driving a cart with tinned milk. Such fools they are; they come to fight, and they stuff themselves with milk and 'chuklade'. Well, we nipped off one of 'em, and the other threw up his hands. So we took him along. We wanted to turn him over to the elder, but now, here's a whole company!"

The American stood erect in soldierly fashion and without taking his eyes off Vershinin, as if the latter were a judge.

The muzhiks crowded closer.

The odor of tobacco and sour peasant-bread floated to the American, enveloping him. The mass of crowded bodies gave forth a warmth to turn the head, and dry, feverish wrath stirred into flame.

The muzhiks began to clamor:

"Now then!"

"Shoot him, the damned dog!"

"Give'm hell!"

"Make an end of him!"

"Go to it!"

The American soldier hunched his back slightly, and, guardedly pulled in his head between his shoulders; at this movement the fierce wrath of the muzhiks flared up still more strongly.

"They burn our villages, the sons of ——!"

"They act like masters here!"

"As if at home!"

"Look how they've butted in!"

"Who asked them?"

Someone shrieked in a piercing voice:

"Get at him!"

At that moment, Pentefli Znobov, who had been a longshoreman at Vladivostok, climbed up on a wagon and, as if pointing to something that had been lost, shouted:

"Wa-it!"

And added:

"Comrades!"

The peasants gazed at his mustache, shaggy as a fox's tail; they looked at the unbuttoned flap of his trousers, through which his swarthy body was visible, and grew silent:

"There's time enough for killing! That is simple! That is easy! Look how many are piled up in the street already! But I think, comrades, we ought to fill him up with propaganda and let him go. Let him smell the Bolshevist truth. That's what I think!"

Suddenly the muzhiks uttered a roar of laughter that came pouring out thickly, like grain from a bag:

"Ho-ho-ho!"

"He-khe!"

"Ho-o!"

"Button your pants, you devil!"

"Go ahead, Pentya, fire away!"

"Knock it into his head!"

"He's a man like others, after all."

"Even a stone can be chiseled."

"Out with it!"

The sturdy Avdotya Steshchenkova raised her dowdy skirts, bent down, and nudged the American with her shoulder:

"Listen, you fool, it's for your own good."

The American soldier surveyed the hairy, bronze-

red faces of the muzhiks, and the unbuttoned flap of Znobov's trousers; he listened to the incomprehensible speech, and politely screwed up his clean-shaven face into a smile.

The muzhiks walked around him excitedly, shifting him about in the crowd, like a leaf over water, and bawled at him, as people shout to the deaf.

The American raised his head, blinking as if gazing through smoke, smiled, and understood nothing.

Okorok shouted to the American at the top of his voice:

"You must tell them there—everything—it's no good like this!"

"Why should you interfere with us!"

"They make you go against your own brothers!"

Vershinin said stolidly:

"You are all good people; you must understand. You are, we may say, peasants, like us; you till the soil, and all that. The Japs, well, they gobble rice; with them it's a different story!"

Znobov stamped uneasily before the American, and stroking his mustache, said:

"We are not highwaymen; we're trying to bring order. They don't know this in your land, I suppose; it's far away, and then, again, your soul is of a foreign land. . . ."

The voices rose and thickened.

The American glanced around helplessly and said: *"I don't understand!"*

The muzhiks at once became silent.

Vaska Okorok said:

"He can't get what you say. He doesn't know Russian, poor devil!"

The muzhiks walked away from the American.

Vershinin was embarrassed.

"Send him to the rear; what's the sense of bothering with him," he said to Znobov.

Znobov would not give in, repeating stubbornly:

"He will understand! Only it's necessary. . . . He will understand!"

Znobov was thinking.

The American remained standing, continually shifting one foot, and swaying slightly.

A scarcely perceptible shadow of wistfulness agitated his face, as a light wind the haystacks.

Sin-Bin-Ou, stretched on the ground near the American, covered his eyes with his palm, and drawled out a high-pitched Chinese song.

"What a torture," said Vershinin plaintively.

Vaska Okorok offered hesitatingly:

"Perhaps some book will do?"

All the books at hand were in Russian.

"All they're good for is to roll cigarettes with," said Znobov. "If only we could find one with pictures."

Avdotya walked over to the wagons that stood along the paddock fence; she rummaged in the coffers for a long time, and at last brought out a worn, dog-eared textbook of religion, the kind used in the village schools.

"Perhaps this,—'religion'?" she asked.

Znobov opened the book and said in a puzzled way:

"The pictures are all 'bout religion! We're not going to re-christen him. We're not priests!"

"Try it, just the same," suggested Vaska.

"But how? He won't understand, I guess."

"He might. Go ahead!"

Znobov called to the American:

"Hey, comrade, come here."

The American approached.

The muzhiks gathered again, once more exhaling the smell of tobacco and bread.

"Lenin!" said Znobov firmly and loudly, and then smiled, as if in spite of himself.

A swift tremor passed through the American's body; his eyes sparkled, and he responded joyfully:

"There's a chap!"

Znobov smote his breast with his fist, and, his palm patting the backs and shoulders of the muzhiks, he shouted, speaking for some reason in broken Russian:

"Sovietska respublica!"

The American stretched out his arms to the muzhiks; his cheeks quivered, and he shouted excitedly:

"That is pretty indeed!"

The muzhiks burst into joyful laughter.

"He understands, the son of a ——!"

"The rascal!"

"And our Pentya, look at our Pentya reeling off American!"

"Send their *bourzhuis* to hell, Pentya!"

Znobov hastily opened the textbook of religion, and pointing to the picture showing Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac, while God was suspended in the clouds above, he began to explain:

"This one, with the knife, is a *bourzhui.* Look at his fat belly; it needs only a watch and chain. And here, on the logs, lies the proletariat, do you understand? Pro-le-ta-ri-at."

The American pointed to his chest, and stuttering joyously, he said proudly:

"Pro-le-ta-ri-at! . . . We!"

The muzhiks embraced the American, touched his clothes, and with all their might squeezed his hands and shoulders.

Vaska Okorok, grabbing him by the head and looking into his eyes, yelled exultantly:

"Lad, you tell them there, over the sea. . . ."

"There, that will do, you fidget," Vershinin lovingly remonstrated.

Znobov continued:

"So, he, the proletariat, lies on the logs and the *bourzhui* chops him up. And there in the clouds is the Jap, the Inglish, the 'Merican, all that trash; the 'imperialisma' herself sits there."

The American tore off his cap and yelled:

"Imperialism! Away!"

Znobov angrily threw the cap to the ground.

"Imperialism and the *bourzhuis,* to the devil!"

Sin-Bin-Ou jumped over to the American, and pulling up his falling trousers said rapidly:

"Russki respublica-a. Chinee respublica-a. 'Mericanski respublica-a no go-od. Japanee no good; must, must get respublica-a. Must get, must get Red respublica. . . ."

And glancing around, he stood on tiptoe, and slowly raising his thumb, he said:

"Shango." *

Vershinin commanded:

"Give him something to eat. Then lead him out to the road and let him go."

The old man who had brought the prisoner asked:

"Shall we bandage his eyes when we take him? Ain't he going to bring them here?"

The muzhiks decided:

"Not necessary. He won't give us away."

* *Good,* in Chinese.

ON THE RAILS

MOUNTED ON A ROUND-BELLIED HORSE THAT was as shaggy as a mastiff, Nikita Vershinin rode along the bushes near the railroad embankment.

The muzhiks were lying in the bushes, smoking and getting ready for a long, stubborn wait. Their shirts —scores, hundreds of motley spots of color—flashed on both sides of the embankment between the crossings—over a distance of almost ten versts.

A lazy horse; a bag instead of a saddle. Vershinin's legs dangled down and his boot painfully rubbed his heel through the carelessly wrapped rags.

"Look here, boys, there must be no women!" Vershinin was saying.

Detachment-commanders drew themselves up soldier-fashion, and briskly, as if steadying themselves through soldierly deportment, asked:

"Any news from the city, Nikita Yegorich?"

"There's an uprising."

"And how's the military advances?"

Vershinin struck the belly of his horse with his heel and started off, feeling sleepy fatigue in his body:

"Advances are good, lad. Remember, we mustn't make a mess of our end of it."

The muzhiks lined up along the embankment as if for mowing. They waited.

The embankment looked unnaturally, disagreeably empty. During the last few days echelons of refugees, of Japanese, American, Russian soldiers, had passed eastward, one after the other. Then a thread snapped somewhere and men were thrown in another direction. There were rumors that the peasants coming from

the hills were plundering the refugees, and the soldiers were envious. Armored Train No. 14-69 was dashing between the stations, and it alone prevented the soldiers from dropping everything and making off.

The guerilla staff was sitting in the switchman's booth. The switchman stood dejectedly at the telephone-receiver and asked the station:

"Is the armored train coming soon?"

Next to him sat a guerilla fighter with a calm face; he held a revolver and he was gazing at the switchman's mouth.

Vaska Okorok was baiting the switchman:

"Don't get cold feet. We'll make you a cook."

And pointing to the telephone he said:

"They say that the learned Bolsheviks in Petrograd talk with the moon."

"Well, who can help it, even if it's so?"

The muzhiks sighed and looked at the embankment:

"Truth can climb even to the stars."

The staff was awaiting the armored train. Five hundred muzhiks were detailed to the bridge. Long Russian carts brought logs to the embankment, so as to prevent the armored train from going back. Crowbars lay near the ties—ready for tearing up the rails.

Znobov said grumblingly:

"Truth and truth is all you know. But we don't know ourselves what it's for. What do you want to talk to the moon for, Vaska?"

"Just from curiosity, that's all! Perhaps we might want to build a muzhik on the moon."

The muzhiks roared.

"Damned sinner!"

"Darn his hide!"

"Here we're trying to dope out how to lose as few men as we can, and he goes batting about the moon.

How are we going to take the armored train, darn you?"

"We'll take it!"

"It ain't a squirrel that you can just nip off a pine."

At that moment Vershinin arrived. He entered, breathing heavily; with a weary movement he put his cap on the table and said to Znobov:

"Soon?"

The switchman at the telephone said:

"They don't answer."

The muzhiks sat silently. One of them began to talk about hunting. Znobov remembered the president of the Revcom in the city.

"That light-haired fellow?" asked the muzhik who had just been talking about hunting; and straight off he began to spin a yarn about Peklevanov: that his face is whiter than wheat flour, and that women cling to him like frogs to a swamp, and that the American Minister had offered seven hundred billion to induce Peklevanov to assume the American faith, but that Peklevanov had answered proudly: "We won't accept you into our faith, even for nothing."

"Son of a ——!" said the muzhiks admiringly.

For some reason it was pleasant to Znobov to listen to all this lying, and he felt moved to tell something himself. Vershinin took off his boots and began to rewrap his foot-cloths. Suddenly the switchman spoke timidly into the telephone:

"When? Five-twenty?"

And turning to the muzhiks he said:

"Coming!"

And as if the train were already at the booth, all of them ran out and, shouldering their rifles, mounted the carts and drove eastward to the blown-up bridge.

"We'll make it!" Okorok was saying.

A scout was sent forward.

They looked at the rails that stretched with a dull glitter among the trees.

"Rip 'em up, and that's all."

And from another wagon came the retort:

"Can't be done. Who'll put 'em together again?"

"We'll go straight in the train, brother!"

"We'll just roll into the city!"

"We can't afford to meddle with the track!"

Okorok shouted:

"Brothers, but they have men!"

"Where?"

"On the train. Special men who fix the track, haven't they?"

"You're a fool, Vaska; and what if we kill them all off? All of 'em?"

And getting into the spirit of it, they all agreed:

"That's the stuff. . . . Kill 'em off!"

"No, no, there'll be nobody to fix the track."

They kept looking back to see if the armored train was coming. They were careful to remain under cover of the woods, for rarely did men expose themselves along the line—the armored train fired on the run.

Hearts were beating with fear; the men flogged their horses, urging them on as if shelter awaited them at the bridge.

About two versts from the switchman's booth they saw a rider on the embankment.

"Ours!" shouted Znobov.

Vaska took aim.

"Shall I nip him off? Or is he ours?"

"The devil he is! Would I be aiming at him if he were?"

Sin-Bin-Ou, the Chinaman, who sat next to Vaska, restrained him:

"Wa-it, Va-si-ka-a!"

"Wait!" shouted Znobov.

The rider came nearer. It was the muzhik with the bandaged head, the one who had brought the American.

"Is Nikita Yegorich here?"

"Well?"

The muzhik shouted joyfully:

"We come there, and we find—Cossacks. Near the bridge! We shot 'em down and turned back."

"Where from?"

Vershinin rode up to the muzhik and, looking him over, asked:

"Did you kill them all?"

"All, Nikita Yegorich. Five of 'em, God bless their souls!"

"But where are the Cossacks from?"

The muzhik slapped his horse on the mane:

"Well, the bridge ain't blowed up yet, Nikita Yegorich. It's standing."

The muzhiks yelled:

"What's that?"

"Pravokater!"

"Smash his mug for him!"

The muzhik began to cross himself hastily.

"On the cross! It ain't blowed up. They blowed themselves up near a rock, 'bout two thousand feet from here. Must have been tryin' out the dynamite. All we found was a part of a man's leg, with the bit of pants round it,—and all the rest . . . gone!"

The muzhiks were silent. They went forward, but suddenly stopped. Vaska, his face all distorted, cried:

"Brothers, but the armored-train will get away to the city! Brothers!"

The crowd of muzhiks who had been sent to the bridge swarmed from the woods.

One of them said:

"There are logs piled up on the bridge, across the track, Nikita Yegorich. We're answering the fire of the Cossacks. Well, there ain't many of 'em."

"Shall we go to the bridge?" asked Znobov.

At this moment, for some reason, they all looked back. A stream of smoke was spreading lightly over the forest.

"Coming!" said Okorok.

Znobov repeated, fiercely flogging his horse:

"Coming!"

The muzhiks echoed:

"Coming! . . ."

"Comrades!" rang out Okorok's voice. "We must stop it!"

They leaped from the wagons, grabbed their rifles, and rushed to the embankment. The horses walked off to graze, munching busily and swinging their bridles.

The muzhiks ran up the embankment. They stretched out on the ties, inserted the magazines; all was ready.

The rails moaned softly. The armored train was approaching.

Znobov said in a low voice:

"It'll just cut us in two. They won't even bother to shoot!"

Suddenly all of them realized this, and they quietly crawled into the bushes, again leaving the track bare.

The smoke was becoming thicker. The wind tore it into shreds, but still it crawled stubbornly over the forest.

"Coming! . . . Coming!" the muzhiks shouted, running up to Vershinin.

Vershinin and the whole staff, all wet, were lying shamefacedly in the bushes. Vaska Okorok smote the ground angrily with his fist. The Chinaman squatted, silently pulling up leaves of grass.

Znobov said hastily, with fear in his voice:

"If only we had a corpse!"

"What for?"

"You see, there's a law—when they run over a corpse—the train must stop. To make out a protocol . . . certificate and all that!"

"Well?"

"Well, suppose we had a corpse. We'd put it across the track. They'd cut it and stop, and then, when the engineer comes out, we shoot him. Then we can take the train."

The smoke was growing denser. A whistle sounded.

Vershinin jumped up and cried:

"Comrades, who volunteers . . . on the track . . . to be run over! We've got to croak, anyhow. Well? . . . And then we'll nip off the engineer! But it's more likely she'll stop before running the man over."

The muzhiks raised their heads and glanced at the embankment that looked like a funeral mound.

"Comrades!" Vershinin shouted.

Not a sound from the muzhiks.

Vaska threw his rifle aside and began to climb the embankment.

"Where to?" shouted Znobov.

Vaska snapped back angrily:

"You go to hell! Sons of ——!"

And extending his arms along his body he stretched himself across the track.

The trees were already murmuring and echoing,

and shreds of yellowish-red smoke, like foam, were leaping over the tree-tops.

Vaska turned around with his face down. The ties smelt of pitch. Vaska put a handful of sand on one of the ties and rested his cheek on it. The sand was warm and big-grained.

The muzhiks' voices came from the bushes indistinctly, like wind among the leaves. In the forest the rails were rumbling.

Vaska raised his head and shouted toward the bushes:

"Got some home-brew? . . . Heart's burning!"

A yellow-bearded muzhik crawled up to him on all fours, with a flask of home-brew. Vaska took a drink and placed the flask by his side.

Then he raised his head, and brushing the sand from his cheek, listened intently to the rumbling: the blue trees were rumbling, the blue rails were rumbling.

He raised himself on his elbows. His face contracted into one yellow wrinkle, his eyes were like two blood-red tears. . . .

"I can't! . . . My sou-ul! . . ."

The muzhiks were silent.

The Chinaman threw his rifle aside and began to climb the embankment.

"Where to?" asked Znobov.

Sin-Bin-Ou, without turning his head, articulated:

"Lo-ne-some! . . . Va-si-ka-a!"

And he stretched himself next to Vaska.

His face, yellow, like an autumn leaf, became darker and more wrinkled. The rails were moaning. Whether it was a man crawling back down the embankment, or the bushes receiving someone . . . Sin-Bin-Ou did not see, did not know. . . .

"I can-not! Bro-thers?" howled Vaska, crawling down.

The grass grew slimy. . . . The sky grew slimy. . . .

Sin-Bin-Ou was alone.

His flat head with the emerald eyes, like the head of a cobra, touched the ties, tore away from them, and swaying, rose above the rails. . . . A glance around.

In the bushes the motionless heads of the muzhiks were staring with waiting, hungry eyes.

Sin-Bin-Ou lay down again.

And once more the emerald-eyed cobra swayed upward, and once more a few hundred heads stirred the bushes and gazed toward him.

Again the Chinaman lowered his head.

The rough, yellow-bearded muzhik shouted to him:

"Throw the flask over here, Chink! And you'd better leave the livorver here. . . What do you want it for? . . . Really, now. . . . And I could use it."

Without lifting his head Sin-Bin-Ou took out the revolver; he swung his arm as if to throw the weapon into the bushes, and suddenly shot himself in the back of the neck.

The Chinaman's body clung close to the rails.

The pines threw forth the armored train. It was gray, square, and the eyes of the locomotive burned an angry red. The sky became overcast with gray mildew, the trees stood like blue cloth. . . .

And the corpse of the Chinaman, Sin-Bin-Ou, clinging closely to the earth, listened to the ringing reverberation of the rails. . . .

THE SOLDIERS

ANDRONNIKOV, AS A MEMBER OF THE PARTY Committee, was hardly ever out of meetings and conferences. And Bertenyev was becoming more and more deeply absorbed in the work of the cheka. From the Moscow Soviet Building, Andronnikov moved to the Rozhdestvensky Boulevard, to the house occupied by the workers of the City District, mostly printers. And Bertenyev moved to Lubianka, No. 11,* into one of the most remote and secret rooms, which at once became cluttered up with little cases, boxes of cartridges, parts of automatic revolvers, Japanese carbines, rifles, etc.

This, however, did not interfere with the friendship between Bertenyev and Andronnikov. But there was no way to express this friendship—not even in conversations. Neither of them had time for talking.

Once, in the days of the Czechoslovakian offensive, they met at the conference of "responsible workers" in the White Hall of the Moscow Soviet.

Andronnikov was summoned to the N.—regiment, as a representative of the Party Committee. Something wrong was brewing in the regiment.

"Let's go together; I have a car," suggested Bertenyev.

So they went.

In the spacious meeting-room, permeated with an

* The general headquarters of the Cheka.

atmosphere of dampness, there reigned the indescribable noise and clamor of many voices, above which could scarcely be heard, from the tribune, the cracked, almost falsetto voice of Reznikov, Commissar of the regiment.

His flushed, rosy face, his never-failing smile, his half sheepish, half childish eyes, and his squeaky voice, were of a kind to excite rather than to pacify the semi-starved, semi-naked mass of soldiers.

"Give us boots, and then sing!"

"All right. We've heard all that. Just you go and try to stand watch in nothin' but a thin shirt!"

"There, 'Comrades!' 'Comrades!'; how quick they learned to jabber the words!"

Angry shouts came from all sides.

Reznikov had long ago lost his voice shouting, and now he spoke in a squeak, with a sort of whistling sound.

Making his way through the crowd of soldiers, Andronnikov could hear Reznikov bringing his last efforts to bear:

"That is just the thing, comrades, that the counter-revolution, subsidized by the bourgeois governments of France and England, wants to squeeze us into an iron ring and to get possession of the most fruitful regions on the Volga, and forces us to exert all our strength to break the head of this reaction, and then we without the slightest doubt will be able to increase the productivity of our factories and plants, will help the peasant to carry out the socialization of land and thus we will attain the just distribution among the entire population and first of all among the new Red Army that we are creating, such as never yet had been seen by the world in the entire world history of all the world."

"Stop your gabbing! Give us boots!"

"We know all that; we've heard it before!"

"That's all well and good, but where's the bread?"

Again the irrepressible voices were clamoring.

Catching sight of Andronnikov, Reznikov was glad and embarrassed at the same time. His flush became deeper, and his tongue, the mischievous thing, kept on moving by itself like a wound-up top, continuing his speech:

"And so we must hold on and maintain discipline. . . ."

"Yes, 'Hold on!' . . . That's why you hold on to potatoes till they rot!"

"What discipline can there be without bread?"

Reznikov had no more strength to continue.

Due to his failure and to his long speech he breathed hard, as if he were fanning ten samovars with his breath. Still, his face bloomed with color, and he smiled, and his eyes were as clear as ever, and his ears burned like the ears of a little boy after a "boxing". He was very, very sorry that Andronnikov and Bertenyev were there to see him just at that moment. . . . He, once a brave Social-Revolutionist and a terrorist, was ashamed at his failure. He was also ashamed in his own sight, that the people whom he loved, for whom he had struggled and suffered, proved to be so ungrateful. . . . There it is, the many-headed people, full of anger, roaring like a wild boar.

The chairman arose. He was without a mustache, a beardless and party-less soldier, with the face of a castrate, and on his chin a mole from which three long hairs stuck out.

"Comrades, comrades. The floor will now be given to the representative of the Moscow Committee of the Bolsheviks. But, before giving the floor to the next

speaker, I must ask you, comrades, to be, generally speaking, organized. If anyone has anything to say, an opinion or whatever it is—come forward and speak up; there's no sense in shouting. Hey, you there, the comrades near the window—didn't you hear? Stop shouting. And the comrade will now tell us the situation from the standpoint of supplies."

Andronnikov began, not very loudly, but firmly:

"I will tell you frankly, comrades, that, as regards the outfitting and the food supplies—you are right. We have no bread or other supplies. We have none, and we have none to give you. Well, what follows? Let us suppose that we send you all home; would there be a single boot more in the country that way? You say,—bread. But you yourselves are peasants; well, let each one of you think it over: do the peasants deliver bread to the Central Stations, as they are supposed to do? . . . And where they do deliver it, are there cars to bring the grain to headquarters?"

Andronnikov showered the meeting with questions, and himself answered them. And little by little he passed to direct reproaches of the audience, and he even scored the disaffected ones hotly. As Andronnikov had eaten nothing for almost two days, his voice was particularly clear and ringing.

Bertenyev and Reznikov sat at the back of the stage. Bertenyev's weakness for observing human stupidity amounted to a sadist delight, especially when he beheld stupidity prominent and uncovered,—not merely stupidity, but sheer imbecility. He, therefore, watched Reznikov greedily, awaiting an opportunity to jump at his stupidity with some remark or question.

"What do you think?" he at last asked of Reznikov, "what will be the outcome of this affair?" And he pointed to the knobbed field of soldiers' heads.

"The devil knows. At all events, we must watch out."

"And I think all this is piffle."

"Most likely. The devil knows. Maybe it is piffle."

Bertenyev bit his lip slightly, and dimples of laughter trembled on his left cheek.

Meanwhile, Andronnikov was depicting before the now completely quiet audience the condition of economic hopelessness that would continue until the attacks upon Soviet Russia ceased, and until the Red Soldiers, instead of clamoring, would give unanimous, unqualified support.

"We, the Bolsheviks, are communists, and we always rely upon the masses. Let the masses decide what's to be done. If a different government is required, come forward and speak openly: 'Down with Soviet rule!' "

And he halted. The soldiers' heads swayed as if in a gust of wind, and the bearded faces became darker than clouds. . . .

"We're not talking about government, but about boots," . . . rumbled the soldiers.

"We're not against the Soviet rule."

"Sure,—we want the Soviet power. . . . What do we want the *bourzhuis* for? We've had enough. . . ."

"And if you want the Soviet rule," Andronnikov caught them up, "then you must support it, you must lay down your lives for it, and not clamor against it. . . ."

And again he continued to heap reproaches upon them.

Andronnikov fitted into the frame of his simple words all the discontent of the soldier-masses, took this discontent, raised it before their eyes, showed it to all, united them all, and having united them, like a skillful pilot he turned this discontent in the other

direction, against the enemies of the Revolution. He proved that the solution of all the hard questions lay in the victorious end of the civil war.

Reznikov had *argued,* while Andronnikov *directed.*

"Hurry up; write a resolution," Bertenyev nudged Reznikov in the ribs, at the same time opening before him a cigarette-case containing thin, yellow cigarettes.

"Oh, yes, you're right."

Reznikov produced his note-book and began:

"Taking into consideration. . . ."

And he fell to thinking.

"Not like this,—that's hackneyed," whispered Bertenyev, his face glowing with a fiendish smile. And a dimple appeared on his left cheek. "Write differently: 'Having listened to the report of the Military Commissar, Comrade Reznikov', this is absolutely necessary; that's how you'll at least see your name on the last page of *Pravda,* tomorrow."

"Very well; but then we'll say: 'Having listened to the report of the Military Commissar Comrade Reznikov, and the supplementary report of Comrade Andronnikov, we . . .' "

"Your handwriting is bad," remarked Bertenyev. "Let me write, and you just dictate to me."

And in his classically calm, beautiful handwriting, Bertenyev began to string letter after letter, like bead upon bead in an old-Russian necklace.

No sooner had Bertenyev and Reznikov finished the resolution, than Andronnikov ended in his ringing voice, inspiring energy and assurance in the soldiers' hearts:

"Long live the Soviet rule! Death to Kolchak, and the Social-Revolutionists, and to all traitors and speculators!"

A tall, swarthy, unkempt soldier, with long arms swinging like two hairy paws, jumped out on the stage and yelled like a trumpet of Jericho:

"Down with the counter-revolution and the generals!"

He clenched his shovel-like right hand into a fist and raised it up.

"Down with them! Hurrah!" bellowed the Red soldiers, and the sound was like the breaking of stones in the mountains.

"Comrades"—the chairman with the effeminate face and the hairy mole on his chin began to speak—"Comrades, the Military Commissar, Comrade Reznikov, will now read the resolution in the name of the meeting."

Reznikov read it.

"Who is for it?" A forest of raised hands.

"Who is against?"—No one.

"Are there any who have refrained from voting?" Someone in the rear rows raised his hand, but, seeing that he was alone, quickly drew it back into the thick of the crowd.

"Accepted unanimously," concluded the chairman.

On that day Andronnikov arrived late for the conference at the White Hall.

LENIN

FROM THE TELEGRAPH ROOM, WHERE HUGHES' AND Morses were clicking, Lenin passed to his small study. He sat down on the armchair and wrote on a little square of paper, in clear, tiny, rounded letters:

"Felix Edmundovich, I consent. Make final arrangements with Yakov Mikhailovich. It is necessary: (1) To perform the entire operation in the shortest time possible. (2) To arrange the details with the military authorities. (3) To pass it tomorrow through the Politbureau.

With communist greetings,
Lenin."

He pressed a button. The secretary entered, a young workingman with a simple, stern face. Lenin sealed the note himself and gave it to the secretary. Then through another door he walked out to the telephone-booth. He spoke with Arzamas. One could only hear: "What? Hello! The center of the city is still in our hands? In ours? Roseholtz is there? I hear, I hear. The center still holds out? The workers are armed? Hello! From what side? From Laishevo? Well. Call up again in about two hours. Good-by."

And again he passed through his study into the telegraph room where Hughes' and Morses were clicking. . . .

And at Laishevo they were already hanging people "for bolshevism," shooting them down, drowning, flogging, cutting off ears. . . .

And in Kazan, in what had been Shchetinkin's rooming-house, there were hasty conferences in the corridors as to what had best be done with the staff headquarters, and with the gold. Some lost their heads, others spoke encouragingly.

And from the Porokhovoi, Alafuz, and Krestovnikov plants, dark-blue columns of workers were advancing toward the Kazan Fortress.

And at Nizhni-Novgorod huge "Ilya-Muromez" airplanes were being assembled for flights over Kazan and Samara.

And on the square in front of the Moscow Soviet Building stood a regiment of workmen and Red soldiers, ready for entraining to the front, and awaiting Lenin.

They called up Lenin by telephone; he kept answering "Presently," and did not appear. Andronnikov, who was going to the front at the head of this detachment, took the automobile standing in the yard of the Moscow Soviet, and passing through the side-lanes, so as not to disarrange the ranks of the regiment, drove to the Kremlin.

At the very entrance to Kutafya Tower he nearly collided with an automobile in which, on the right, leaning somewhat toward the corner, sat Lenin; he wore a crumpled black hat. Seeing Andronnikov, Lenin at once shifted to the other side of the automobile and shouted:

"You are after me? I am coming, coming."

The cars passed each other, but Lenin halted his, and Andronnikov, overtaking him, changed to Lenin's automobile.

Andronnikov liked this sand-colored face, these wrinkles, as if hewn in stone, radiating from the nose, these pupils, black and fiery.

In general, such a simple face. If not for the eyes, it would even appear commonplace. And there is contradiction in the eyes: they are kind and stern at once, but beneath the kindness and the sternness there lurks laughter somewhere in the depths. Such a merry, sunny laughter, like Pan's. Andronnikov did not realize this, however, and at the moment he was especially far from feelings of this kind. But all this—the kindness and the sternness, the laughter and the intelligence merging into something out of the ordinary and at the same time simple and human—whirled around Andronnikov, enveloping him. With this unusual and at the same time plain human quality, Lenin seemed to embrace Andronnikov.

That is why Andronnikov was always at a loss when they asked him: "And what kind of man is Lenin?"

Lenin pulled his crumpled hat down on his ears so that the wind might not blow it off, and again sank into the corner of the automobile, at the right.

"What do you think—will they take Kazan or not?" he asked Andronnikov.

"We will hardly be able to hold it," answered Andronnikov.

"And how is the spirit?"

"Well, the spirit of our men is good. The boys realize the danger."

Lenin was at once on the alert; he narrowed slightly his left eye and raised his right eyebrow. Somewhat sidewise, approaching his right ear, he leaned toward Andronnikov; when Lenin listened he listened with his whole being, without reserve.

"They realize it," Andronnikov was saying, "especially the workers. However, so do the Red soldiers, now."

"And what is their attitude toward the creation of a big army, a real army?"

"Sympathetic. It will have to be done, anyhow."

The automobile drove through the lane into the yard of the Soviet.

As was his habit, Lenin seemed to break out of the automobile; he ran up the stairs and flew into the Præsidium room. Andronnikov could hardly keep up with him.

Then they both came out on the balcony. Andronnikov was solemn. His blue eyes were shining; all his features, somewhat palled by sleepless nights and starvation, became more tense and more sharply outlined. A new leather coat, with a "fish-fur lining," covered him strangely and clumsily, but it glistened so! It was such a pleasant, new sensation to feel it around his shoulders, chest, arms! And in Andronnikov's soul, too, there was a great renewal. All things and all people were already different to him—fresh and new.

Next to him stood Ilyich, all heated, and, bending over the banisters of the balcony, he delivered a speech, turning slightly to right and to left. He spoke, drawing the words from the very depth of his being, on account of which the very sound of his voice was rich, succulent, full of that special vital power which, in a full stream, pours assurance into hearts. All Lenin's words were ordinary. But when such a word enters your heart and you bite into it—it contains a kernel. And through this ardent Lenin, through his furrowed, sand-colored face, through his simple eyes,—are they fiery or soft brown?—through his whole stocky figure, Andronnikov was again enveloped by the strange dizziness that embraced him in a peculiar, human way, like something very, very near. As if this man were his elder brother.

In the midst of Lenin's speech Andronnikov's ears suddenly caught: "It is a devilishly difficult thing to govern a country." . . . "Can it be that we, with him and similar people, actually rule the country?" thought Andronnikov. And such a man: a brown coat on Lenin, a crumpled hat. And what power! All this is so near, our own—and what power! Andronnikov remembered that metal pours out in this way: at first hot, soft, obedient to blows and to the hand. And after it is poured it becomes cold, cutting, always powerful, invincible. Thus with power—it is born in fire, in flame. Then it cools, to become invincible.

Lenin had finished long ago. Someone from the regiment was now speaking, and the words kept whirling in Andronnikov's head: "We are invincible; we, we, we are invincible."

Meanwhile, on the Square, the order had already been given to form ranks and march. Andronnikov, somewhat agitated, touched, entered his automobile.

"Comrade," the chauffeur asked him, "and how is Vladimir Ilyich? What kind of man is he?"

"Just like any other,—an ordinary man."

"He isn't."

"Why not?"

"Just because he isn't!"

In the evening his friends arranged a farewell party for Andronnikov.

Not more than eight persons in all gathered about a tarnished copper samovar that stood puffing between two card-tables shoved together. There was Golubin, a plain Russian workman; there was the host, a printer, hunched and pale, with tufts of hair in spots on his emaciated face; and his wife, a pale woman with eyes black as coal, that were always laughing and teasing. Reznikov, too, sat here. Two men were re-

clining on the sofa: one of nondescript age, of Jewish type, somewhat cross-eyed, somewhat dirty, continually pulling up his trousers with both elbows; and at his side a Lett, with sad eyes, and regular, commonplace features, like large pavement stones. The first, the slightly unkempt one, held the Lett by two buttons of his coat and seemed to be about to dive into his bosom for greater convincingness. Somewhat to one side of them sat a girl with bobbed hair, in a blue dress and blue pince-nez,—Nesmelinskaya. At a distance, giggling for some reason, there clung to each other two blondes, almost little girls, workers; both wore soft slippers cut out of an old skirt and tied up with strings.

Babaev was pacing the middle of the room; he wore a black shirt, one hand was stuck into his belt, the other in the depths of his shaggy hair. At a distance from the table, nearer to the window, Bertenyev was struggling silently and absorbedly; he was endeavoring to unearth from the corner piled high with old books, boots, rifles, and straps, the piano that was buried there.

When Andronnikov entered, Babaev was saying: "All that is true, but why this red tape again . . . A-ah! Mikhail Ivanovich. How are you? We're going together, it seems?" Babaev turned as he saw Andronnikov.

"No, brother," resumed Babaev, addressing the host, the printer. "The point is that the muzhik is not a fool, and he has understood who is against him, and he has understood the Bolsheviks."

"One can see that he has understood them well," retorted the pale printer, "since he comes with his bags to Soukharevka market, for illegal trading; and what type of muzhik, at that? The poorest class."

"That's not the point. That comes from need and

not from the soul. In his soul he is with us; in the question of need we ourselves are not with him and we did not know how to approach him."

"Always 'did not know how'. In 1917 we wrote tearful appeals to him: 'Bring bread to the stations; we're dying'; and he turned his back on us. 'Did not know how', you'll say. Then began the requisitions—he hides away his bread; again 'did not know how', I suppose. Whatever you do with them, all will be 'not knowing how'." The pale-faced printer waved his hand, not wishing to argue any further 'merely to excite himself'. From his early youth he had been in the city, in his printing shop. His father, too, had never left the Moscow basements. The printer, therefore, did not have much affection for the peasants. But Babaev, a homeless tramp, had many times come in contact with the muzhiks in the course of his life, and found in them response and a brotherly attitude; so he flared up:

"You're talking nonsense. You reason like a *bourzhui* or a landlord. Is such reasoning communistic? You and I are nothing without the peasants. . . . Do you understand?"

And from the sofa where the two were sitting a self-assured voice was heard, with a tinge of challenge:

"Sovnarcom is, of course, nothing else but the proletarian cabinet of ministers."

"Then Tzic is a parliament," retorted the Lett.

"A parliament, and not a parliament; one must think dialectically. We, the Marxians. . . ."

Meanwhile Bertenyev, Andronnikov, and also Reznikov, who had joined them, dragged the piano from under its load of junk, and dusted it, so that the two girls clinging to each other sneezed in turn.

"I put my faith in Ilyich alone! After the Brest-

Litovsk peace I acquired a great faith in him," said the girl in the blue pince-nez, Nesmelinskaya, who was seated on the arm of the sofa.

"Ilyich? Nobody argues about that," remarked Andronnikov.

"And you cannot find a warmer champion of the peasants than he is," put in Babaev.

"That's just it," assented Nesmelinskaya.

"But he champions them in a peculiar way; he approaches them *as workers,*" remarked Andronnikov, who was panting on all fours, repairing the piano-pedal.

"And that's the right way. . . . Here is what I can tell you, boys. . . ." Babaev for some reason tightened his belt, smoothed his shaggy beard with his fingers, once more scratched his head, and hemmed. . . . "M-m-yes! . . . Once I wrote a letter to Lenin. Not this is the way to approach the peasant, I wrote. And so I put down everything, so to say, in order. This and that, this and that, and so on. You're a bit wrong, Ilyich, and so on, and so on. A long time passed. Just before leaving for the front I went to Lenin. So much more that I had a responsible task in connection with Colonel Muraviev. M-m-yes! So I came to him. He talks of this and of that, but does not mention the letter. 'What is the matter?' I think. And I even have his signed receipt. Could it be that he had not read it? Probably not; he has forgotten, he's busy. I feel rather put out. So much more that I wrote there in great detail about the question of food supplies. I chose a moment and asked him: 'Did you get my letter, Vladimir Ilyich?' He sits in the middle of the table, and I somewhat to the side. He at once turned to me with his whole body, his fists resting on his thighs, and approached his face to me near, near, and

squinted, you know, as usual, with one eye. 'I did,' says he. And again he leans backward and talks of other things. And not a word about the letter. 'Just wait!' think I, and again I choose a moment, and ask cautiously: 'And . . . hem . . . did you read it?' And again he squints with one eye and flashes with the other. 'I did,' says he, and again talks of other things. Well, nothing is to be done, apparently;—he does not want to talk. Then he started saying good-by. And all the time 'Comrade Babaev' and 'Comrade Babaev'. One could see he wants to say something more. But I keep quiet. I already had my hand on the door-knob, about to open the door. He takes my hand. 'You know, Comrade Babaev,' says he, 'if you feel like writing to me about things I shall be glad. Your letters will be given to me direct. Be sure to write.' We parted in a real friendly way. That's the kind of man he is. And I knew he understood that what I was writing to him was good sense."

Bertenyev tried the keys of the piano with a skilled hand, and began to play. The whole room lit up at once, as if with a double light.

" 'To govern' means 'hand in hand'; one common thought," reflected Andronnikov, to the sounds of the music that excited him. " 'Higher and higher'," he kept on repeating to himself, not knowing what his own thoughts were.

And the sounds flowed on, as if rejoicing at their resurrection from chaos.

" 'More and more bravely'," Andronnikov kept repeating to himself, without knowing why.

And behind the window, which was covered with curtains, the quiet, black Moscow street was crouching. Quiet, black, like a malignant traitress.

"Trrrrrr, trrr. . . ." the telephone bell burst in madly, ringing in their ears.

Andronnikov sat near the telephone.

"Hello!" he said.

"Where? At the Basmanny?" he asked, starting and turning pale. "Ah-a! At Zamoskvorechye, at Michelson's? . . . I'm coming at once."

The sound of music, the sound of words broke off. Thoughts and feelings broke off.

Andronnikov, slapping his cap on his head, only had time to say in his hurry:

"An attempt . . . upon Lenin!" . . .

THIRTEEN

I

VANKA IS THIRTEEN, AND HIS THIRTEEN YEARS manifest themselves in everything. They jump like thirteen tiny imps over Vanka's joys, and they crouch silently beside his sorrows. And Vanka himself, tiny, weak, resembling a callow kitten, seems to be the victim of his thirteen. It is not he who scurries joyfully through all the departments, squeals, and shakes hands with everyone he meets when a communist from the factory is elected to the Moscow Soviet, and it is not he who whistles frenziedly and shouts "Down!" when some menshevik attempts to bamboozle his comrades.

It's the thirteen that do all this.

Vanka himself is quiet and bashful, modest and timid.

And when it happens that the menacing clouds of a shut-down gather over the factory, Vanka feels with all his little inner self his thirteen becoming alarmed, and then little gray wrinkles appear on his straight, childish forehead, and the little bells of his voice cease ringing through the corridors. The blue, oily shirt wanders about like a silent shadow, and does not know which way to turn.

Vanka is afraid to go to the Director, though he knows that the Director is a Red—one of their own, a workman-director, a communist.

The atmosphere of the Director's office is somewhat oppressive. The place breathes great sternness, and it is as if the walls are about to come together and crush little Vanka. And on the walls: "Be brief," "Time is money," and many other posters,

and among them, a portrait of old Lenin himself, Vladimir Ilyich, so dear and near, asks smilingly:

"What have you come for, Vanka? You little rascal, don't disturb the Director."

This means that he must go out through the corridor to the yard, and through the yard into the repair shop, then to the outhouse where, upon a little door, there is a modest inscription:

The R. C. S. M. nucleus is located here.

Vanka is thirteen, and the constitution requires fourteen! Here is exactly what it says: "Any young worker, fourteen years of age or over, is eligible to membership in the League."

And in the meantime he is allowed a voice but not a vote. Oh, how he longs not to be just advisory: it makes one feel hurt and wronged; Grishka is a member with a full vote, and he is in the same grade and in the same shop. . . . And so are Fedka, Senka, Vaska, Stenka, and Skinny Vanka. What have they done to deserve it?

It's all the fault of the thirteen.

And when a resolution is being voted upon at a meeting, and a whole forest of hands springs up above the blond moss of heads—he wants so much, so much to raise his hand together with the rest, but he is afraid: it seems to him that everyone is eyeing him with the warning, "Vanka, don't forget the constitution!"

Every evening the entire factory gathers at the big club. The grown-ups in the reading room with the newspapers; the young people each according to his inclination.

First of all—the girls go to Maslov, to the library: "Give us a novel. . . ."

"Now, what's the bright idea?"

They become dumb and hide behind Jolly Manka. And Jolly Manka says saucily and coquettishly:

"A novel, an interesting one, where they write about love. . . ."

"You fool, don't you know that those books are not for us? They're written for high-school girls."

"Well, and are we worse than high-school girls?"

"That's enough, now; beat it."

Manka swiftly puts her hand into her bosom and pulls out a book, and on the book it says: "The Keys to Happiness. A Novel by Verbitskaya".

"There, take a look at this!"

And she scampers off to the hall—the others trailing after her.

Twilight fills the hall. From the row of cards, appeals, and posters, only one stands out boldly—"The Code of Labor Laws,"—and under the "Code" a group of youngsters stand listening to Mitry, the chief of the "Bureau". Mitry is speaking about God. And it seems as if Mitry has a dynamo in his head, and that fifteen thin, invisible belts extend to the fifteen little heads. Brain mechanisms are awhirl.

Manka cries shrilly:

"Ah! Vanka! Vanka is here! . . ."

And she begins to sing:

"Vanka, little Vanka-puff,
About as big as a pinch of snuff; . .
Now we're all in the Comsomol,
Only Vanka is too small—
He has no party—he is barred,
The only one without a card.
Tell me, little shpingalet,—
Why haven't you got your card as yet?—"

*A slang term denoting one who steals into a meeting-hall, theater, etc., without a ticket.

Vanka starts, and the little belt that bound him to Mitry snaps and breaks.

Mitry says softly:

"Why do you disturb us? Better listen to our discussion."

"Discussion indeed! All nonsense. . . . And don't you stick up for your brother; he can look out for himself."

Fedka whispers:

"Vanka, give her one! . . ."

"Ah, the deuce with her. . . ."

And black anger stirs within Vanka.

Then Manka and the other girls surround the youths in a close ring.

"Tell us, Mitry, about the fires of the Revolution."

The anger scatters like a white cloud. The black lump in Vanka's throat breaks up, his tongue moves from behind the hot lips:

"Yes, yes, the fires of the Revolution!"

At night Vanka sleeps in a dark, close room in the same bed with his brother Mitry. Mitry sleeps sweetly, deeply, breathes heavily through his hot nose, and all about him is a stream of sweaty, bitter breath.

Vanka gazes for a long time at his brother's "full-voting" face, catches greedily the beats of his heart, breathes the close air, and ventures:

"Mitry, oh, Mitry! . . ."

"What is it?"

" 'Bout the nucleus. . . ."

"What, again?—again about the school? . . . Tomorrow, tomorrow. . . ."

"No, not about that. . . ."

"Makes no difference . . . tomorrow; it's time to sleep now."

"Why does it say fourteen?"

"What fourteen?"

"In the constitution."

"In what constitution?"

"Of the Comsomol."

"It's there so as to keep *shpingalets* like you out of the League. Understand?"

"Yes. But Mitry, why am I worse than the others?"

Mitry's answer is curt and grouchy:

"It ain't allowed. . . . He knows, darn him, that it ain't allowed, and still he wants to butt in. . . ."

That's how it goes. . . . Better to sleep and stop bellyaching.

"U-uh, the——!" Bold and malicious thoughts rise up. His head feels heavy, his chest tightly compressed.

"All right, Mitry, all right—and he calls himself an activist! . . ."

The wind howls crazily in the dead of night and dances like a reckless Comsomoletz. The stars twinkle in different shades—some agree, others disagree, and the meeting ends with the morning.

And when there are no more stars and no more wind, and a thick fog envelops the great auditorium of the sky, then black, leather-clad Petro pulls the thin nerve of the factory, and the factory yells with all the power of its mechanical throat:

"Huh. . . . Huh. . . . Huh! . . ."

In the house, the mother rises slowly. One can hear her moving about behind the partition, her mouth twisted in a sweet, languid yawn:

"Oh-oh-oh. . . . Our heavy sins. . . ."

White shadows crawl over the walls; they climb over the cornices, like white lambkins, and become entangled in Marx's beard in the picture on the wall. And Vanka knows that his father will wake up pres-

ently and say softly: "Mother, eh, mother, how about a samovar?" And then, louder: "Hey, Comsomol, d'ye hear?—mother is waiting for us." And it seems to Vanka that his father says that about the Comsomol on purpose. . . . For he knows that Vanka has no membership card.

In the morning the samovar grumbles like a dull-edged tool-bit over iron; in the morning the windows are damp with the sap of the departed night. Father and Mitry drink tea and look into the blue haze, talking about Party affairs. Mother looks after Vanka: her hands are sinewy; her kind, caressing eyes watch his chin steadily:

"Drink, drink, Vaniushka, and take some bread, sonny. You're getting too thin in your Comsomol."

A sense of hurt swells in Vanka's heart. Oh, how he hates mother with her caresses and her care! How he would like to join in the conversation of his father and his brother!

II

Time is a huge lace-frame weaving the endless lace-work of days. It stretches in white and red streaks that wind about the pulley of the universe. And thousands of living human beings keep winding up their powers, as upon spools, and stretch out in thin threads, becoming interwoven in the moving lacework of life. And if one grows slack, and unravels—out of the machine he goes. New, fresh little spools with pink, silken twine are waiting in the raw-material department.

Fedor Ivanych—Comrade Rodin—the teacher of Political Rudiments, says that life is moving towards communism. And that the lace-frame of life is tended by the best men of the working class—the

communists. Firmly welded together, they comb with a strong, steel comb millions of threads, and weave them into the most intricate designs. And the first weaver of them all is Vladimir Ilyich—Trotsky and Kalinin are his right-hand aids.

The spools find it hard work at times, so do the steel comb and the aids, but the hardest task of all is that of the chief weaver. The pulleys turn and grumble, the flywheels swish, the belts tremble rhythmically, the leather-paths wheeze. The filmy dust from the threads floats in the air, settles on faces and shirts, poisons the body. It seems that something is just on the verge of breaking down, and then the gigantic machine will stop. Only, the strong spring in the forehead will not give way; the searchlight of the eye gazes firmly, the aids stand firm.

At night Vanka sleeps in a close, dark room in one bed with his brother Mitry. Vanka sleeps. He dreams that a locomotive of tremendous power is hitched to the lace-frame department. "Uh!"—it blew a deep blast, sprang forward with a jerk, and went on and on toward Moscow River. And Moscow River is not a river at all, but a sea, the sea of the Social Revolution. The locomotive, without a pause—straight across the waves. The waves splash over the roof, flood the inside of the engine. The flame of the furnace flares up, burns the greedy tongues of the sea, and heavy logs are spluttering and hissing.

And Vanka is the fireman beside the furnace.

His skin is all in blisters; they spring up in little white knobs; the waves lick them and break them. Ah! . . . it would be nice to get away from this damned furnace, to jump into the embrace of the waves, to refresh the body; but Vanka hears a voice:

"Tired, Comrade Nazarenko?"

He looks up and sees—Lenin!

Foam froths in the heart. Imps in the foam. Gosh! . . . How they dance, the sons of ——!

"No . . . not tired, Comrade Lenin."

"And what do you think—will we make communism?"

"We'll make it, Comrade Lenin."

"Well, then, keep going, brother; it's not far from here."

"Aye, aye, Comrade Lenin!"

The skin is all in blisters; they spring up in little white knobs; the waves lick them and break them.

Suddenly—stop! . . . an island!

On the island it is summer. Streams of sunlight. The wind plays caressingly. Houses glow with colors. People appear.

"Good morning, Comrade Lenin, and who is this with you?"

"This is Comsomoletz Nazarenko."

"No, Comrade Lenin, I am not a Comsomoletz. I am one year short in age, according to the constitution."

"Ah, really?"

And suddenly Lenin produces a brand-new Comsomol card and gives it to Vanka. Vanka sees his name on it, his surname. . . . Ah! . . .

"Vanka, hey, Vanka!"

"What is it, Comrade Lenin?"

He opens his sleepy eyes and sees Mitry.

"Why—the card—where is the card?"

"What card?"

"The card of the League."

"Whose?"

"Mine."

"Where'd you get it?"

"Comrade Lenin gave it to me. . . ."

And suddenly Vanka realizes that he had seen Lenin only in a dream—and that nothing had really happened.

With bitter sadness he told Mitry about it.

Mitry was touched:

"I see, Vanka, that you'll make a good Comsomoletz. Only, you and I are now in the same boat—you want to join the Comsomol, I the Party. . . . I'm in a fix, just like you;—I'm too young—that's what they say. . . ."

His brother's words echo with a low peal in Vanka's heart.

"That's right, that's right, Mitry, we both need just one year; let's make an agreement—we'll join together next year."

"That's a go!"

And their tongues rattled till sunrise.

Again the samovar grunts like a dull-edged tool-bit over iron. Again the windows are damp with the sap of the departed night. Father and Mitry listen in silence to Vanka's dream.

"Oh-oh-oh!" his mother crosses herself. "What dreams, what dreams you have, sonny!" . . .

Very gently she pushes another slice of bread toward Vanka.

Vanka has no eyes for his mother, and he does not see his father and brother:

"And there stands, he himself, and says: 'What do you think, Comrade Nazarenko, will we make communism?' 'We'll make it, Comrade Lenin,' says I."

And Vanka experiences something that never happened before: his father's strong arm reaches out, the lad feels the touch of his coarse hair, his black beard

is like a brush. Smack-smack—the hot lips on the little forehead.

III

The clouds swell like a mixture of brown-rubber in the overturned caldron of the sky; they hang over the gray tub of the suburbs. They seem ready to tear themselves away and come trembling down upon the cold mass of snow; viscid—they will plaster the buildings, will cover the earth with a thick spread. Muddy brooks will run from the yards into Moscow River. Little streams will stretch like wire-threads over the rough, unsteady ice. The sun will flare up like a fiery bason. The air will become close, and on the next day Moscow River will start to move, will start without any ice-cakes, clear as molten metal, and where it will move to—who can say? And then the little yard will begin to blossom, the little yard that stretches down like a chin. Its cheeks will become overgrown with grass, and prickly warts of bushes will stick out from under the piles of rubbish. And in the garden, which is half a verst from the factory, falling petals will begin to whirl: white petals from the trees, yellow petals from the flowers; they will whirl like soft down, like the shavings in the wood-turner's lathe in the repair shop. And then summer will come, like a young weaver in a skirt of many colors, carrying a load of woven stuffs.

The old garden will become shaggy, like Karl Marx, and will shake its locks and beard. . . . Excursions will begin. . . . The young folk will go to the *sovkhoz*. Rough hands will have a rest, the brain-stuff will relax, and the boys will flip coins, bowl, play football, tag, and "pegs",—and then autumn will come, and —fourteen.

Vanka crouches like a hedgehog on the porch of the Fabcom. Something bristles in Vanka's heart like a hedgehog, but he does not know what it is. The air of March sends a chill through the body, but warm joy flows through the body, too, like a brook.

And the thirteen already anticipate the coming of the fourteenth. What a joy it will be! Vanka and Mitry will walk up to their father and say:

"Congratulations, Comrade Alexei,
To you and sons are due this day."

That is just how they will say it. And there will be three cards in the house—no, four—Mitry will remain in the Comsomol until he is twenty-three.

And if there comes a call to the front, Vanka will say as Mitry used to say: "In accordance with the decision of the general meeting I am going to defend the Revolution."

And father will say "Go, my boy," because he is a member of the Party, and because he has calloused hands. Only, mother will probably cry, wailing, "But you are so little, so little," and this will offend him; but no, she will not say it, after all, because he will be grown up by then—he will be fourteen years old.

Near him, on the porch, two little girls, about eight years of age, drawl mournfully in tremulous voices as they sway from side to side:

"I loved, I suffered—ah, but he,
The scoundrel, soon deserted me."

The sounds fill Vanka's ears and taunt his throat. Like a little rooster, he bursts forth:

"Forward, to meet the dawn!
Comrades, through struggle!
We go to blaze the trail,
Comrades, to meet the dawn!"

The wind was softly spreading twilight over the earth, but the twilight would not come, and the wind grew angry. Then the twilight came, driven by the wind. And the workers were returning home from the factory, and the wind kept urging the workers on homeward from the factory.

And two tunes were still struggling in the cold air; one beaten, mournful, beseeching, begging for mercy; the other triumphant, lacerating, and merciless. And it seemed as if they were both calling the March day, one back to Winter, the other forward toward Spring.

Volodin, a lathe-hand, walks slowly toward the gate from the repair-shop. On seeing Vanka he winks and yells:

"Van—kou. . . ."

Vanka comes skipping to the lathe-hand, takes him by the hand:

"Uncle Van, I am joining. . . ."

The lathe-hand smiles slyly, his white teeth shine like little, gleaming plates.

"It's taking you awful long. . . ."

"No, now we'll join together with Mitry. . . ."

"How can that be, when Mitry is an active member already?"

"No; we made an agreement for next year—he'll join the Party, and I the Comsomol—we both need one more year. . . ."

"So you've agreed on it?"

"Yes, and it'll be on the same day, too, and the main thing is, Uncle Van, that now it's not so hard, for I'm not alone, like before. . . ."

"Well, kid, this makes it easier for you?"

Vanka flushes with embarrassment, then he says:

"Sure it does! . . ."

Great coarse fingers—very, very warm they are—rub Vanka behind the ear, crawl slowly up his neck, and pinch his cheeks.

"Say, Vanka . . . and why do you want so much to join the Comsomol? Is it just because everybody is in the Comsomol?"

Vanka's thoughts string out like thin shavings; they even gather on his forehead like a tangle of wires.

"No, Uncle Van, it ain't that—or maybe, I don't know, I can't say 'gzactly; but the main thing, the oratere said, 'Comsomol,' says he, 'is the brain of youth.' I want to be with the brain, Uncle Van. . . ."

Vanka's heart beats like a drum; he cannot catch his breath, and the big warm fingers creep closer and pinch his cheeks softly and tenderly, and the evening fawns upon Vanka like a great, shaggy cat.

IV

Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and again Sunday, again Monday—so it stretches out—the lacework of days.

Here comes a bit of bright and gay-colored lace, the festivity of the Comsomol Christmas. It is celebrated with a carnival: Vanka rigged himself out as a little black devil. Fedka as a deacon, Mishka as a priest, Mitry as a witch,—whatever came into their heads.

They jumped, shrieked, giggled, sang, danced.

In the morning they went to the district headquarters. They met others. Merged together. Flowed in a stream along the streets and sidewalks. And in the evening—a party. Girls, youths, young and old, not one of them cared a straw for God or devil.

The holidays rolled away and a campaign rolled in. The campaign was called "The Red-Fleet Campaign".

A comrade with a brief-case came, called a general meeting of the local, gathered the factory youth. The comrade spoke about the local. Then came a sailor with a gold tooth in the front of his mouth and spoke about the existing situation in the fleet. It was decided to render assistance with men and money.

In order to help out with men—Senka was sent. At the nucleus, at the headquarters, on the Red Square, they threw Senka up in the air and caught him again with shouts of "Hurrah!". And because of this Senka walked about as stiff as a ramrod. The girls pestered him, gazed at his sailor's clothes, and sang the navy ditty:

"'Ho! little apple—where are you rolling?'
'Oh, mother, my sweetheart is calling!
Not Lenin or Trotsky I'm going to meet,
But a young sailor o' the Baltic Fleet!'"

Old workers glanced at him and said, "There's the salvation of the fleet."

In short, Senka was a hero.

They escorted Senka to the depot. They instructed him: "Don't be a slouch," promised him presents, asked him to write. Senka was all excited and his former swagger was gone. He pledged himself not to "compromise" the local.

"Good-by, Moscow, good-by Comsomol,
In the Red Navy we're going to enroll. . . ."

And when the intoxication of joy had passed, Vanka again wished for the coming of Autumn, that would bring with it his membership card.

Old Petro stuck up a poster in a prominent place in the repair shop:

Official Announcement

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

. . . In view of a considerable turn for the worse, a daily bulletin will be issued from this date, about the state of health of V. I. Lenin.

From early morning people keep crowding about the poster. They read the announcement and disperse silently. Foreheads frown, shoulders stoop, eyes grow cold beneath the eyelids.

"It's pretty bad with Vladimir Ilyich. . . ."

"Pretty bad. . . ."

And at the nucleus of the R. C. S. M., the secretary reads to the meeting:

Circular Letter

Concerning the 25th anniversary of the R. C. P. (Bolsheviks). The best gift that the Comsomol can make to the Party would unquestionably be the transfer to the Party of the pick of the youth from the workers' nuclei.

Secretary, M. C.

On this day work would not go forward at the factory. Women continually broke threads in the basons, and deft hands struggled clumsily with the clutching steel-spiders. The weavers got their designs all wrong, their machines stopped suddenly, and sharp, experienced eyes could not locate at once the cause of the trouble.

The same condition prevailed in the repair shop,

in the button department, in the winding department; and even the old blacksmith, all shaggy and hirsute, who never spoke to anyone except to his tools, scorched his long, gray beard, after which he said to Vanka (Vanka was the old man's assistant):

"Ah, it won't go, somehow. . . ."

And then, frowning, and damping the fire:

"Listen, youngster; even though you are a Comsomoletz and don't know beans about nothing, and less about work, still I will ask you, for it ain't proper for an old man like me to ask the grown-up communists. I don't like them, they ain't real communists; they just worry about their pockets, and they ain't got a proprietor's eye to things,—not they."

Little Vanka dries the beads of sweat, and wipes his nose, too, with his hand. He straightens up and his eyes dance toward the old man.

"Gladly, Antipych. . . ."

"Gladly. . . . I know myself about 'gladly'—. You're always glad to chatter, just to get away from work; I know you, you son of a ——. But tell me. . . ."

His voice trembled.

"Is it true that Ilyich is . . . er . . . pretty bad?"

"It is true, Antipych. . . ."

The old man quietly sat down on the anvil, crossed himself with a wide sweep, three times, and whispered: "God forbid!" . . . .

Vanka, uncertainly:

"What, grandad,—it seems you are for Ilyich?"

"For whom else?"

Joy flooded Vanka's brain. He shouted in a ringing, challenging voice:

"But he is a communist. . . ."

The old man rose, straightened out his mighty stature, and grumbled:

"Let's work. Never mind jabbering now. . . ."

And choked. And when the fire was roaring again, the bellows panting, and the iron hissing, the old man mumbled slowly and grudgingly, in tune with the iron:

"Well, what of it? Suppose he is a communist? There are all sorts of communists. If they were all like him, there wouldn't be no need of this here communism—it would be just a name. . . ."

And at the bason shops and repair shops little groups gathered to discuss, and nobody bade them disperse. The young people even walked out into the yard. Jolly Manka cast down her eyes and was as quiet as a hen.

"Friends, where can we find the secretary?"

"He went away to the Raicom."

"And Mitry?"

"He too. . . ."

Each of them shrinks, becoming like a heavy lump, and their hearts shrink; forebodings dart about like shuttles.

And Vanka stands at the window. Vanka burns to join his gang. Tremulously and slyly he says:

"I'll be back in a second, Antipych. . . . I'll find out everything. . . ."

"Well, go ahead."

The bell rang clangingly in the factory school. The youngsters ran out like rabbits. Long Petka, in front of all, shouts:

"Well, friends, why do you hang your heads?"

Manka, angrily:

"Don't you know?"

Long Petka assumes an oratorical air:

"I know, but what of it? . . . What's the good of this here desperation? Help, doctors,—that's what's needed, for there ain't no God to take pity on us,

and they'll get doctors without us. But here is what we can do, comrades. A circular just came to the nucleus about the Party Jubilee. We must get up for the Party a present that'll beat the present to the fleet—that's how we can help Ilyich, the devil take you. . . . For there ain't many workers in the Party, and Ilyich has overworked himself. . . ."

The youngsters felt a bit better, as if Long Petka had blown with long bellows into their hearts and had cleared and spread apart the contracting walls. Eyes sparkled and blossomed beneath the open eyelids.

Little Vanka shouts eagerly:

"Brothers, but whom shall we send?"

"It won't be you, *shpingalet.*"

Oh, what a sting Vanka felt in his breast! Something struck his brain, parched his throat, the whites of his eyes turned moist. He whispered in embarrassment:

"No . . . 'course I ain't talking 'bout myself. . . ."

"Don't butt in, then. . . ."

Vanka slunk to the background, but he felt first of all like smashing Manka's face with his little fist, and then saying to all of them aloud: "Do you know, all of you, if you want to know, that Mitry, whom you're surely going to elect, won't join the Party till the very time when you'll take me into the Comsomol, for we've agreed on that. We're both a year short." But he did not say it—let Mitry himself announce that at the meeting.

Then Jolly Manka, pensively:

"Well, and whom are we really going to send?"

Senka, thoughtfully:

"I think, friends, that this is up to the Booreau; we'll send whom they'll propose, because . . ."

Long Petka interrupted, mockingly:

"Because, because, you dumbbell. What kind of a Comsomoletz is the fellow that's always depending on the Bureau, and ain't got a penny 'orth of 'nitiative? . . ."

"And what d'ye think the Bureau's for,—just to run errands?"

Manka, pacifyingly:

"Cut it out, boys,—just nonsense. . . . Of course, we must talk it over. . . ."

Senka, scenting defeat, bristled up and clenched his fists:

"We'll talk it over, all right. But now, just tell me—I'm a dumbbell . . . am I?"

And whack! Petka got it under the ribs.

"There's a dumbbell for you! . . . Take that! . . ." he fumed and shouted.

Long Petka became distorted with rage:

"Oh, you dog! Just wait; I'll trim your dirty mug for you. . . . Take that, and that, and that, you son of a Fascisti!"

A fight started. Little by little all joined in. Vanka pushed eagerly at Manka; he aimed to give her a blue eye, but missed,—Vanka cannot reach the cursed eye; in his rage he began to punch her below the breasts.

The non-communist workers from the repair shop, and the women from the bason department look on:

"There, just look what's going on; see what keeps the Comsomol busy! . . ."

The master-mechanic appeared. He sees the fray and shouts:

"Hey, you, vamoose; this is no time for tomfoolery."

And while they were dispersing, Vanka rejoiced; he felt the realization of his eager wish close at hand. That would be a nice pill for Manka to swallow!

And on the next day the Comsomol gathered at the

club. The Party-secretary, Pal Mironych, spoke about the Comsomol. Helpers for Vladimir Ilyich are needed now, he says, "for he is overworked". And the Comsomol is training the aids. So now the time has come for sending the helpers.

All this is perfectly clear to Vanka, but what if Mitry should suddenly accept? . . . How the boys will make fun of Vanka! What will Volodin, the lathe-hand, say? . . . No, this cannot be; didn't they make a compact? And besides, Mironych will say that it won't do—Mitry's a year short, according to the constitution.

The chairman, a gay, reckless fellow, rings two bells at the one time: one of copper, and the other—his throat; he knows his business.

"Comrades, the Bureau of the nucleus proposes Anna Solodkova, nineteen, and Mitry Nazarenko, seventeen. They are surely known to all of you, and they've given their consent."

Voices respond like a humming bee-hive:

"Right you are . . . we know . . . seconded . . . we thought of 'em ourselves. . . ."

Vanka looks at his brother and sees that his eyes burn in an unusual way. But what about Mironych?

Mironych?—nothing; he raises no objection:

"So they are considered accepted."

And Vanka hears nothing more of what is being said; he only feels that his head is swimming, the young comrades around him begin to whirl and whirl; tables and chairs whirl . . . his head swims; the comrades whirl around; tables and chairs whirl. . . .

"Ah . . . what's that? . . . Vanka's fainting! . . ."

"Well, if he ain't!"

Voices clamored and shrieked, rumbled, shouted, yelled. . . .

"What's wrong with him?"

"It must be from joy; his brother Mitry is transferred to the Party."

"No, it's not joy. They had a compact, you know, to join together, one the Party, the other the Comsomol, so I bet he's sore. . . ."

"So that's it? . . . Ain't he a Comsomoletz yet?"

"That's just it; he's only thirteen, and, the main thing, he's the only one of that age, otherwise we would organize the 'pioneers'."

The night was warm, almost like spring. In the overturned caldron of the sky there were washes of every shade of blue. White, button-like glow-worms swam in the washes, just like in the button department.

The young folk are gathered at the gates to pass a few hours together, and in the house Vanka lies on the bed like a small, ungainly lump. Shavings of thought flash like lightning through his brain. Questions flare up like bluish puffs of smoke. And the oil in the brain-machine keeps on burning and burning. "How is this, now . . . how is this . . . is Mitry right or wrong?"

The shavings of thought squirm and coil, clutch boldly at each other, surround his head with a ring of fire, and all the thoughts reduce themselves to this:

"Who is more important—Vanka, or Lenin?"

At Moscow, in the Khamovniky section, on the night before the twelfth of March, the big auditorium of the Second University burst out into blossom. It blossomed with the lilacs of eyes. And because of this the faded eyes of the Nachpur, Comrade Antonov, also turned lilac, and his voice became as sweet as lilacs, for Antonov was speaking about the Jubilee of the Party.

And after Antonov, the "Trumpet" spoke, and recalled the days of underground work in the time of the Tsar, others with faded eyes spoke and brought up reminiscences. Their speeches revived the lilacs that had faded away in distant prisons. They threw it in clusters to the audience, crowning the young heads.

And from all sides of the spacious hall, little folded notes streamed like a white brook over the heads—a brook that seemed to ooze through the tangled moss of hair.

The notes contained greetings to Lenin, wishes for his rapid recovery; and from all these notes, whether written well or badly, in smooth style or clumsily, there seemed to rise the odor of new-formed callus, unspent sweat, untilled brains.

And when the elected were being transferred from the Comsomol to the Party, and as each of the transferred, swayed by a whirlwind of emotions, made his way to the table, received the candidate's card, Bukharin's booklet—"The A. B. C. of Communism,—" and a Jubilee badge, the audience choked in the frenzied waving of arms, uproar of shouts, ringing of congratulations, and the orchestra was drowned in the wild clamor of the youngsters' throats.

A whirlwind of stormy joy swept through the audience. It beat against the walls in a frenzied impact. And there was no Vanka in the audience, just as there were no other Vankas, Kolkas, Petkas, Dunkas, Mankas. There was one many-eyed many-headed monster; one joy played in its breast, one love flamed up, one devotion and readiness for sacrifice.

And when Mitry approached the tribune, Vanka shouted with all his might, closing his eyes in his frenzied exertion:

"Mitry, remember, don't disgrace the Comsomol. . . . Be a true helper to Ilyich. . . ."

And people turned toward Vanka and saw his ungainly little figure enveloped in the flood of joy. And Vanka yanked out a notebook from his pocket, tore out a page, and began feverishly to scrawl on it in an uneven hand; then he passed it to his neighbor and whispered:

"Write. . . ."

"Sure. . . ."

"Once more . . . please, please, send greetings . . . to the dear leader of the ploritariat, V. I. Lenin."

By V. N. of the lace-factory,
named for Comrade Sverdlov.

And the lone little note floated like a frail boat toward the chairman, nearer, nearer, nearer. He reached out for it, took it, opened it, and smiled:

"Comrades, I have here another motion to send greetings to Vladimir Ilyich. Any objections?" Not a single one.

HUNGER

(*A Diary*)

April 25, 1919

I LOVE PETROGRAD! THROUGH THE CAR-WINDOW one can already see the chimneys, the churches, and the roofs, roofs, roofs. And the vast, smoke-laden sky stretches over it all. God, how my heart is beating! One minute more and I shall be there!

I jumped out on the platform and was at once overcome. People are shouting, hustling, and running about. I have brought some food with me. I am taking it to my hungry papa, and it seems that, at the weighing-stations, every bit of food is being requisitioned. A large crowd has gathered around the militiamen. The people cry and curse. Will they really requisition my supplies, too?

Thank God! I slipped by the weighing-station successfully. Heavens, what is this? It is already ten minutes to six by the station-clock! And the tram runs only till six. And I have far to go! To the Port! Will I make it?

I hurry through the station, paying no heed to anyone. Elbowing my way, right and left. And I know, I know, that my two pitiful braids are swinging disgracefully behind me. I am sure everybody is laughing. And I am wearing a hat, at that. . . . I have come to Petrograd to work. I am now fifteen years old.

Like one possessed, I ran out upon Znamenski Square. How brazen those boys are! How they pester me, "Miss, Miss, a wagon!"

"Now then, you wildcats, away with you! There, you've got the young lady all upset."

I raise my eyes and thank the man, almost with tears.

His face is plain, broad, red-cheeked. His eyes are remarkably kind. And he has a long, blond beard. Surely, he will not cheat me.

"Let me carry your things, miss. Don't worry, everything will be all right. . . . Just come over to the tram."

"Thank you, thank you. I want Number Five. Which one is it? . . . Please. . . . Lord, where are you putting me? I have to go to the Port! And where does this go to? Where?"

"Hurry up, hurry up, lady! You'll miss the last tram. This is just the right one! To Vasilievski."

And I hear someone on the platform saying:

"To Vasilievski; this goes to Vasilievski."

Thank God, I have made it. I look back and see that the muzhik has his hand outstretched:

"How 'bout a little tip, miss?"

And, of course, I blushed. Always, always I blush when I give anyone money. How silly! Well, how much shall I give to this . . . comrade?

I blush still more, and extend toward him a twenty-rouble *kerenka.*

"Is . . . is . . . this enough?"

Heavens! All the faces on the platform begin to smile. They glance at the *kerenka* in my outstretched hand, and smile. Of course, of course, I am giving too much!

And the comrade suddenly says:

"It's rather little, miss."

The impudent wretch! And his face is not at all good-natured, but sly. The disgusting public laughs still more. A gentleman, wearing eyeglasses, glanced

at me, frowned, and turned away. And the comrade still stands with outstretched hand.

I search my purse for another *kerenka,* and my fingers tremble. Everybody is laughing at me, and I stand there, red-faced and embarrassed. I give him another one:

"Change. . . . Have you got change?"

"No, miss."

The mean thing! And he dares to laugh. He leers, and laughs.

"Never mind . . . never mind . . . take it and go. . . . Keep the change."

We ride along the Nevsky. How sad and deserted it has become. Dear, dear old Nevsky. They say people die of hunger while walking the streets. God, how will I keep alive? Is papa suffering very badly from hunger?

We are already at the Nikolaevski Bridge. Here is the Fifth Line. Soon, soon.

I pull the door-bell with all my might.

"Who's there?"

Oh, what an angry, irritated voice! This is Antonina. She must be hungry. And I have brought almost nothing. . . .

"Tonechka, darling, open. . . . It's I . . . I. . . . Don't you know me?"

I throw myself upon her neck. I kiss her and cry. How strange! Why am I so glad to see her? She is an utter stranger to me. My brother's wife. And she is harsh, unkind. Her neck is bony. And she is not glad to see me now. I feel this through my tears. And still I keep kissing her for some reason.

"Have you brought anything?"

"Oh, Tonechka, forgive me, I haven't brought any bread. I have traveled all the way without food my-

self. Here in the bag there's still a little piece left, and the crumbs. . . . Just a minute, Tonechka."

And Tonka looks at me with a heavy and hostile glance, and gazes with great curiosity at my bags. I am sure she thinks that mama has refused to send anything from the country. But we had no bread ourselves; we lived on nothing but potatoes. Oh, how greedy and unpleasant she looks! Even my hands tremble. Feverishly I untie the bags and shake the crumbs out upon the kitchen table. I untie them all, all.

"Here, mother sent some dried mushrooms for papa and Shura* . . . a little butter . . . and pot-cheese. And there is nothing more, not even for papa."

Antonina is bitterly disappointed, but she says:

"Well, never mind, we really don't need it. We're not in want. Only, papa is starving. He'll grumble because you haven't brought anything."

"What? You're not starving and you're letting daddy starve? Are you living apart?"

"Yes, yes. . . . And it's your pop's notion. You don't know yet what a miser he's become! When he goes to work he locks his door. As if we were thieves. Well, never mind, let's go in and have some tea."

Ah, how my heart began to ache! Is this the way for relatives to live? Is it possible that my dad has grown so miserly? I have not seen him for eight months. If he is so stingy, how will he act when he sees me?

I enter the room and see little Tamarochka sitting on the bed. She has just awakened and she has nothing on but her nightie. Her little knees are pink and dimpled.

"Tamarochka, Tamarochka, my angel! It's I,

* Shura, diminutive form of the name Alexander.

Auntie Fea! Do you know your auntie? Tonechka, look, she's a darling! Isn't she a darling!"

I love Tamarochka with all my heart. I whirl her around the room like mad. Suddenly Alexander enters.

He sees me and looks glad. God, how thin and pale he is! I know that he cares more for me than for the others, but I am always rude to him. I love him in a way, but there is something shrinking and pitiful about him. He is the oldest brother, but he looks stupid.

And now, when I saw his gaunt face, I at once felt so sorry for him. Yet I greeted him as usual, in an offhand way, and asked him, instead of a greeting:

"You haven't got a job yet, have you?"

I knew that he would be embarrassed. How dejected he looks! They have probably worried him with this question every day. And now, I too.—How mean I am! Poor, poor Alexander! He took offense and walked out of the room.

Antonina is cutting about half a pound of bread into very thin slices.

"Sit down, drink some tea. Too bad that yesterday we were not in time to buy bread. Otherwise, we are not in want."

Her eyes are lowered upon the bread and she does not look toward me even once.

"Wait, Tonechka, I do not need bread. I have some crumbs left in the kitchen, and also a piece of bread. . . . I'll get it."

"Well, never mind! Eat mine. We're not in want."

"No, no, just a minute."

I ran to the kitchen. Heavens, where is the bread? Somebody has eaten it! It was here just a minute ago. And now it's gone.

"Tonechka, Tonechka, come here! Where's the bread? It was here just a minute ago, and now somebody has eaten it."

Antonina ran in, angry.

"Well, who could have done it. Shura, I guess."

"Alexander? Impossible! Is he really so hungry? Ah, here he comes!"

"Did you eat the bread?"

He is silent. But I can see that it is he who ate the bread. Such a big man. He's twenty-five, and yet his lower lip is trembling. I pity him and I want to tear him to pieces at the same time.

"I didn't know. I didn't think it belonged to anybody."

"What do you mean, anybody? Couldn't you wait till we sat down to tea? Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Aren't you? We're all hungry."

"But how much was there—altogether?"

"Little or much, you should have waited."

Alexander is just helpless. He does not know what to say. I am sorry for him. But I am ashamed before Tonka, so I shout at him. I am ashamed, yet I keep on shouting.

Tonka looked on for a while, and at last interfered:

"Let him alone, Fea. He's really hungry. Pop gives him next to nothing to eat. Never mind, I've enough bread; come, let's have tea."

My heart seemed to weep. And tears welled up in my eyes. I could hardly restrain myself. Poor, poor Alexander! Papa starves him. Ah, how cruel he has become! Alexander has grown thinner, and his eyes are sunken. How will I be able to live with papa?

And during tea Tonka tells me how things are.

She screws up an angry face, but there is laughter in her eyes.

"I really don't know how you are going to live with him. He's grown so stingy! I don't keep account of every piece of bread, nor does my Mitiunchik, but he locks his room against us. What are we—thieves? And yesterday, you know, we had no bread. But he had some. I invite him to dinner with us, and ask him: 'Have you any bread, papa? We haven't any today?' And he throws me a quick glance, like a wild beast, and says: 'I have a little.' And he brought out a big chunk from his room. He cut off a tiny slice for each of us, and took the rest back. You can't imagine how hurt I felt. Is that the way Mitiunchik and I treat him?"

I listened, and my heart ached in pain, humiliation, and fear. What a horror, what a horror! He will starve me, too. I wish mama would hurry and come from the country. Tonka, too, hates me. She probably enjoys telling me all this. Well, never mind, I shall try to look cheerful.

And I, too, begin to talk. What a pleasant journey I had! Frenev accompanied me all the way to Vologda. Frenev is my betrothed. We even kissed at Vologda. But why doesn't Alexander eat his slice of bread? And he looks timid, as if he does not dare.

I glance at him questioningly.

And Tonka guessed at once. She raised her little eyebrows and said:

"Eat, Fea, and you, Shura, have some, too."

That was it! That was it! Shura did not dare to take any without asking. Fie, how nastily he eats! And he tries to do it unnoticed; he wants to appear at ease.

He pretends to pay no attention to the bread and asks:

"And is mama coming soon?"

"Yes, why?"

He blinks timidly and chews, smacking his lips.

"Soon. . . . Yes, yes, she'll come soon."

And meanwhile he takes another piece, and another, and another.

Tonka watches every slice. It is disgusting, and I pity Alexander. I tell him with my eyes that he must stop eating. But suddenly I am ashamed. The poor boy probably knows that he is eating too much, but he is hungry and cannot restrain himself while there is bread on the table. Thank God, he is going at last.

Tonka follows him with malicious brown eyes. Then she looks at me. What is she going to say now?

"And you know. . . . Your pop has become terribly untidy. He's all covered with lice."

I stare at her with wide-open eyes. Lord, this is too much! I cannot keep up my cheerful face any longer, and I shout indignantly straight at her face with its long, hooked nose:

"No! No! Impossible, impossible!"

"Why impossible, you fool, when he goes to the bathhouse only once a month? You understand, he grudges the money even for a bath. So they breed. And then there's the hunger. They crawl all over the floor, over the chairs. I don't let Tamarochka go inside that place."

Something like loathing stirs up in me against my own father. . . . Awful, awful, disgusting! Nothing in the world will make me sleep in the same room with him! I will rather sleep at Tonka's, on the

floor. And how did he come to this? I will grow to hate him.

"Tonechka, dear, I'll sleep in your room. I can't stay with him."

And Tonka lowers her eyes to the table. Fear clutches at my heart. Will she really not let me?

"But we have no room. You see how crowded we are."

"Tonechka, dear, I'll manage; somewhere on the floor."

"Well, then, but we have no room."

She continues to tell about papa. Twenty times she repeats that he does not trust his own son and that he locks his room. And he starves himself. He has bread; he gets enough from the factory. He has even accumulated a reserve supply and the bread has become moldy. And the herrings have begun to stink. And he starves Alexander completely. Alexander would have given out and dropped dead long ago if she had not given him something now and then. And all this because he cannot get a job. It appears he has been promised the place of assistant-janitor at the Hotel Europe. He is to begin there tomorrow.

I listen greedily, craning my neck. Now it is no longer a sickening feeling against father that arises in me, but a painful one. Heavens, how hunger has distorted him! Since 1918—hunger, hunger, nothing but hunger! It is a stroke of good luck that the factory is again at work, otherwise it would be altogether bad. Even from his letters to the country one could see that papa had changed. He wrote that we were to come, but one could read between the lines that he did not want it to happen. Mama, too, is coming soon. How will we all be able to live with him?

The bell rings.

Tonka jumps up. I feel my heart beating quickly. It beats with fear. This is papa.

I run after Tonka to the kitchen. She is already opening the door. I stare with wide open eyes and my heart is beating, beating, beating. . . .

He enters.

An expression of kindliness seems to pass over his thin, tired face.

"Ah, you've come? And how is mother?"

"Yes, papa. Good evening."

Strange, why did I not kiss him? This has never happened before. Even as he shook my hand my heart stirred with a sense of loathing. He has lice, lice. But he appears kind. Only, his left eyebrow is twitching. And it twitches in such an unpleasant way. Yes, yes, I do not trust your kindly face. It is all put on, false, on purpose. You are stingy. You starve Alexander. And you will starve me. And you have lice.

Yes, I was not mistaken, and Tonka was right. Papa continues, without stopping:

"And our Shura is still without a job; that's how we live. Oh, Lord!"

I was hurt by this tone and by these words. Of course he is ashamed to say it point-blank to his own daughter, so he warns me in a roundabout way. Very well, I shall not eat your bread. I wish I had work right now.

"Papa, come have tea with us."

It is Tonka's invitation.

Before sitting down to tea, father pulls his bread from his pocket. And to me it seems that he is drawing something out of my heart. It aches because he is cutting off such careful, thin slices. He cuts one

for himself, one for Shura. And for me? What does it mean?

And he suddenly says:

"You're not hungry, I guess, fresh from the country? You didn't travel without eating, of course?"

The blood rushes to my head. I feel that my eyes are sparkling with hatred, and I hide them.

"No, I'm not hungry."

"That's good. And here, we are starving."

After cutting off the slices, he wraps the bread in a newspaper. Then he returns it to his pocket.

I watch from under my eyelashes how he moves his gaunt fingers, and I feel hurt, and I am sorry for him, and I hate him. How terribly he has changed! With what miserly movements he wraps the bread in the paper. How disagreeably he stuffs it into his pocket.

"Well, let's go to sleep."

Again he looks at me in a kindly way, and I am suddenly seized with fear. Sleep with him in one room? God, but I am afraid of him now! And those lice! . . .

"And where do you sleep, dad?"

"In my room. Haven't you been there yet? Come, I'll show you."

I look at him in surprise. Another new trait: he is insincere with me. Has he forgotten that the room is locked?

We enter.

With a feeling of horror I place my feet on the floor. There must be lice all about. There are two beds in the corners. Yes, there is no room for me.

"Papa, there is no room here. I will not put you to trouble; I'd better sleep at Tonya's."

"Don't be a fool; she has no room either."

"Well, I'll put up on the floor there."

"I tell you to stop talking nonsense. Sleep where you are told to."

A threatening tone. He is truly angry. He might even order me out. One can expect anything now.

They vacated one of the beds for me, and went to sleep together.

In ten minutes papa is snoring heavily and repulsively. I am lying with my face buried in the pillow, crying. Oh, Lord, Lord! He asked me to come to Petrograd. He says I must earn my bread independently. He did not even let me finish the fifth year of the Gymnasium. He tore me away from school, roughly and pitilessly. He did not let me complete the remaining three weeks. He wrote to the country that we are piled on his neck. And how harsh, how stingy and filthy he has grown! He starves Alexander. And he will starve me if I do not get work soon.

Half asleep, I heard through the wall Tonka's Mitiunchik coming in. He is my brother. He is twenty years old. I am not very fond of him.

Then, for a long time, behind the wall, they talked about something. They mentioned my name. I could not hear in what connection, but my heart shrank and ached. And suddenly, like a whip on the bare flesh, I was stung by a low but distinct phrase:

"I wish these lice-breeders were out of here. On top of that, when mother comes, there'll be absolutely nothing to eat."

And at that moment father began to move about in his sleep. Had he heard everything, and my sobbing, too?

Then his terrible, muffled voice comes crawling through the darkness:

"I'll leave the door open tomorrow . . . you watch the place."

A bitter loathing ran through my body. Even my feet were seized with cramps, and my teeth sank convulsively into the pillow.

God, what horror, horror, horror!

And at night I saw golden dreams.

I dreamt of Sergei Frenev. He again accompanied me all the way to Vologda. Then the parting kiss after the third bell. I threw myself on his breast and babbled incoherently:

"Sergei, Sergei, don't think ill of me. In two years I'll be your wife."

And he looked at me so tenderly, so tenderly. He kissed me, but only upon the brow, and said, sadly:

"And you mustn't forget me, little Fea. You won't? Will you?"

"No, no, Sergei, never!"

He jumped off the moving train. For a long time he stood and waved his cap. And all my being was singing within me:

"He loves me, loves me, and I'm almost a child, with my little pigtails!"

I woke up because somebody was pulling my hair.

"Feiusenka, get up."

Startled, I awake and see that it is Tamarochka. She keeps tugging at my hair.

I jumped up joyfully. I kissed Tamarochka wildly, and suddenly the thought of yesterday's happenings comes back to me.

Feverishly I examined the bed-linen. And indeed: two, two. . . . Well, thank God, not so very many. Tonka had exaggerated, as usual. I'll tell her to stop fibbing.

A slice of bread lies on the table. I suppose it is

my morning portion. What a small one, though. I ate it, and it was as if I had had nothing. If it is going to be like this every day, it will not be a very sweet life.

I dressed and ran to Tonka's room.

"What did you frighten me for? Only two. . . ."

"Two? Very well. I'll show you, after tea."

I know why Tonka is treating me to tea today; until I find work I shall have to be nurse-maid to Tamarka. Tonka herself works at the Post Office and she is on the day and the evening shift alternately. Mitya also works at the Post Office. He works mornings. He has left already.

After dinner Tonka leads me to papa's room. Tamarochka runs after us.

"Look!"

Turning her eyes away, she passes two fingers over the woolen blanket and in a second she picks up a big, gray louse.

"See? What did I tell you?"

Her face becomes distorted. With a lustful glitter in her eyes she crushes the louse on the floor.

I hold my breath. Tonka turns to me and says triumphantly:

"That's the kind of fat cows he breeds."

"Tonya, stop, stop! I can't stand it!"

We have not noticed that Tamarochka has approached the blanket. She came close to it and shouted:

"Oh, it luns, it luns!"

At three o'clock Tonka was ready to go to work. Her hat already on her head, she still keeps following me about. I can see that she wants to tell me something, but does not dare. At last she speaks:

"Well, make yourself at home; look after the chil-

dren. And then another thing—Mitiunchik is not to go anywhere today, and . . . if he does go out ask him where he is going? And remember the time."

She speaks, and her eyes turn away from me. They gaze to one side. Foo, the devil, she is jealous! Another trouble. How vile this is! I should never be jealous if I had a husband. I would simply say: "If we are not suited to each other, let us part." It disgusts me to look at her, and I do not know what to say. And she continues:

"Well, will you do it?"

I, too, avoid looking at her, but answer between my clenched teeth:

"All right, all right; go now."

She went away, and immediately Shura came in. By daylight he looks even more exhausted and crushed. Shadows lie under his sunken eyes. Something warm ran through my heart. I say to him softly:

"Well, how are things with you?"

He gives me a sidelong glance.

"The day after tomorrow I start as assistant-janitor at the Hotel Europe."

"Thank God! And what card are you going to get?"

"Special, three-quarters of a pound of bread. . . . Oh, Fea, if you only knew how hungry I am!"

He spoke and frowned. Then he turned away. Then he looked at me again. His eyes became like the eyes of a child—pitiful, beseeching. But what can I do? I have nothing myself. He must be thinking: "She brought bread from the country and has hid it somewhere."

"But what can I give you? There's nothing."

"Didn't papa leave you anything?"

"Nothing. But wait. . . . I think I saw something in the kitchen, on the window-sill. Let's go and look, both of us."

On the window-sill we found some boiled beets and potatoes. I was very glad, but then I notice that the beets are half decayed and the potatoes frozen. Oh, papa, papa. . . . Tonka was right: he lets the supplies rot. What a miser! It is disgusting. I say to Shura, almost in tears:

"But it's all rotted, Shura."

He gazed and smiled in such a way that I wanted to cry.

"But we always eat rotten stuff. And he gives little enough of that. I warn you, you'll get it if we eat this."

"Never mind, eat. I'm not afraid of him."

"And you?"

"I . . . I don't want any."

It is not true that I do not want it, but I simply feel nauseated at the sight of these moldy beets and potatoes. And Alexander eats greedily, greedily. I . . . I could never eat such beets.

An hour after Tonka left, Mitya came home. His face is pink, beaming, and self-satisfied. Tonka said rightly that they have no lack of bread. And is it not a shame that they do not help Shura! Isn't he their brother!

Spying me, he said carelessly:

"So, you've come, Feiusha?"

And that was all.

April 27

I was mistaken; yesterday morning papa had left on the table, not my morning portion, but my food for the whole day. Papa receives on his citizen's card,

as a workingman, one pound and a quarter of bread, and also some sort of "armored ration", half a pound for each working day. I have no card as yet, and from this extra half-pound father doles out to me a little piece for the entire day. He says that he cannot give any more. He himself eats at the factory dining room. For the time being I dine at Tonka's, but she looks askance at me. Never before have we lived like this, dividing up every scrap. It must be because of this that we look as if we were ready to fly at one another's throats.

Alexander gets half a pound of bread per day. He also has a dining-room card. In the evenings, separately from Tonka, we prepare our supper: herring, with potatoes and beets.

It turned out that the beets and the potatoes which I gave to Alexander yesterday were intended for supper. Papa asked me sternly: "Where are they?" And he said nothing more, but we went to bed without supper. Before going away this morning he put everything under lock and key.

Mitya promised to find me a place at the Post Office. I wish it would happen soon. . . . Papa reminds me every day that I came here not to loaf but to work, and to help him support the family.

Ah, how hard it all is when I remember that I ought to be studying now! I go to bed and cry. . . .

April 28

I am already completely reconciled to the thought that papa has become close-fisted and harsh, and that he thinks only of himself, but today he gave me a great surprise.

In the evening he brought from the factory-store about six pounds of bread. All day long Alexander

had complained of hunger, but did not ask for anything to eat. He knew that everything was locked away. My heart aches, but I have nothing to give him.

As soon as papa came I said to him:

"Oh, papa, how hungry we are!"

At once his eyebrows contracted into a frown. But he said:

"Go, prepare a herring."

And he followed me into the kitchen. He opened the cupboard himself and took out a herring and some boiled beets. He seems to have put aside a week's supply of these beets. In fact, they are already boiled.

I want to wash the herring, but it has a bad smell. And the beets are almost putrid, like those we had yesterday.

"Oh, papa, but all of this is rotten."

Papa does not look at me, and says in a didactic tone:

"It's not rotten; just a little frozen. We can't throw it away now. It costs money."

Well, if we can't throw it away, we can't. I prepared it and we all sat down. Papa cut off a thin slice of the fresh bread for me and for Alexander.

Of course, we ate it quickly. Suddenly papa asks kindly, kindly,—he has given us an extra piece of bread:

"Well, have you had enough?"

I almost choked at this question, it was so revolting. If I could, I would tear from my throat the piece of bread I have swallowed and would throw it back to him. I answer maliciously:

"No."

He did not expect this and looked at me sternly and attentively. He said nothing. Silently he cuts

another piece for me and wraps the bread in paper. There is no second piece for Alexander. I am ashamed to eat an extra piece with him looking on. I glance quickly toward him, and Alexander turns away and looks through the window. I am so sorry for him that the tears come to my eyes. Without touching my piece of bread I say to papa:

"And Shura?"

Alexander keeps looking through the window.

Something passes across father's face but does not dare come to his tongue. Without a word he unwrapped the bread and cut off a piece for Alexander. Alexander hastily snatched the bread without looking at it, and walked out to the kitchen.

As soon as he had left papa's face changed, as if by magic. He gazes at me with a sort of strange reproach, and at the same time triumphantly. Not getting any sign of curiosity from me, he suddenly pulls out of his pocket about a pound and a half of white bread and indicates it with his eyes. Then he says out loud:

"On the card . . . white . . . good."

He cuts it into two shares: a larger one for himself and a smaller one for me, and keeps looking at me with triumphant reproach. And the blood rushes to my cheeks. I want to say: "Shame, shame, is he not your son?"—and I do not know what it is that prevents me. Very well, I will give him half of my portion, later.

And papa seems to have guessed my thought:

"Have you had enough today?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, let me put it away. You'll have it tomorrow, with your tea."

April 30

Tonka and Mitiunchik are really not in need. I do not know where they get the money, but they buy bread every day and have soup and meat. Very, very seldom do they ask me to dinner. There are relatives for you! Ah, I wish mother would come sooner! We are leading a terrible life here. In the evenings we can hear Tonka grumbling at father behind the wall. And papa pretends not to listen. After the closing down of the factory, papa had lived with us in the country for almost half a year, and he had come to Petrograd only recently, when the factory reopened. He had had no place to live in, and Mitiunchik had let father stay with him—as if it were charity. I can imagine how papa felt all along. No wonder he changed so terribly. Perhaps it is not from hunger alone. He cannot say anything to them, and pretends not to hear. He has become a mere rag. I feel sorry for him, and I also feel bitterness, hatred, and disgust. He has become miserly, harsh, taciturn, morose. I am even afraid to spend the evenings alone with him. He comes in silently in the evening. He eats in silence. Then he puts on his glasses and reads the newspaper. And remains silent all the time. Lord, how I hate him during those long hours! And he seems to sense my hatred. Sometimes he throws a frowning glance from behind his paper and says nothing. And yet an uncomfortable feeling stirs in my heart. And I fear his dull eyes in his meager, yellow face. I am glad that I sit in a dark corner where he cannot see my tears.

And at times I notice that he seems to be timid towards me. I know that he avoids undressing and looking for vermin when I am present. When I surprise him at this occupation, he looks like a school

boy caught in a misdeed. Immediately, keen pity and hatred and loathing rise up within me.

Last night I went to bed and suddenly remembered: "I haven't had enough to eat on any day since I came."

I remembered this, and at once I was seized with fright as never before in my life. I lie as if crushed by that thought, and it is so huge, so huge. And all other thoughts were hushed.

Then my heart began to ache and I burst into tears. And, due to the tears, perhaps, all the hushed thoughts began to stir again, like worms. I crawled away from them and from papa's terrible snoring, and hid under my blanket and cried and cried.

And in the morning I rushed to the mirror. I had come rosy-cheeked and vigorous, and now I am entirely different. There is still some color in my cheeks, but it is a rather pale color. And before it was red, like fire.

And all that day I was listless and lazy. I had no desire to go out into the street. I lay on my bed and read until nightfall. And I had no real desire even to read. My constant thought is that I shall suffer hunger.

May 1

Today is the first of May.

Papa is not working. This morning he dressed up in his new coat and became just like my former papa. He has brightened up so. And that makes me feel happier.

I am suddenly conscious that he wishes to tell me something. He keeps following me about with a guilty look and glances at me cautiously. I, of course,

am immediately on my guard. I assume a hurt air, in advance.

At last he speaks:

"Well, in honor of the holiday we may treat ourselves to dinner."

He said this and looked at me timidly, not like a father. And my heart turned to stone at once. I answer, my eyes gleaming harshly:

"So? But we never cook dinner. And besides, we have nothing to cook today."

But poor papa pretends not to hear, and says in explanation:

"We shall go to the restaurant, on the Seventh Line."

To the restaurant? The idea! How can I go there? It's embarrassing. . . . Only men dine there.

"Papa, do women and girls go to the restaurant?"

"You little fool! Whole families dine there. What are you worrying about, then?"

We walked out into the street. The day was bright and sunny. Workmen and Red soldiers march with flags, singing the "International". And because they sing the day seems still brighter and the sun warmer. All the faces are so joyful, so strong. Even papa thrusts forward his sunken, dried-out chest. He walks along the sidewalk and hums the "International" under his broad nose. And suddenly I notice that I, too, am chiming in. As if none of us had ever suffered hunger.

After dinner papa asks me quite kindly:

"Well, have you had enough?"

"Oh, yes, papa dear, quite enough."

His eyes smile and look as if they were keeping up the tune of the "International".

"There is a tea-room not far from here. . . . Let's go and have some tea."

"O, papa dear! To the tea-room! But there are only mùzhiks there."

He answers with kindly annoyance:

"How queer you are! What's the difference? Didn't you go to the restaurant?"

"No, no, papa; I won't go."

"Well, just as you please. They won't eat you there, though."

Papa shrugged his sharp, skinny shoulders and took out two pieces of candy from his pocket. With a guilty air he said:

"This is for you, and this for me. I got it yesterday on my card.—Well—go then, but where? Home?"

"No, daddy. I'll go to visit a friend."

"All right. But try to be back not later than nine."

Oh, papa, papa! He has probably bought the candy, but he says: "on the card".

I felt something clutching at my heart. As if somebody were prodding it painfully with a finger. Hunger has spoiled my papa,—hunger.

May 3

Am I glad or not?

Yesterday Mitiunchik came home late in the evening. I was already in bed. Then I heard him knocking on the wall.

"Feiusha, get ready to go to work tomorrow . . . at the Post Office . . . the fifth department . . . under Alexander Andreevich."

Next morning Mitya and I came to the Post Office. Thank God they are all girls working there, only

one man. Everybody knows Mitya. They shout from all parts of the room:

"Hello, Dmitri Alexandrovich!"

"How are you, Dmitri Alexandrovich!"

And Mitya is a perfect boor. He brought me to the middle of the room and said:

"Here's my sister. Good-by. . . . I'm in a hurry."

I could hardly restrain myself from running after him. I lost my head and stood staring at them.

A pretty, slender blonde comes up to me. Her hair is golden, fluffy, and curly. Her eyes are big and black, and her face is pale. There is something oversweet about her.

"Well now, sweetie, you'll work with us. I'll explain the work in a minute."

She seated me at the table next to a dark young lady. The dark young lady looks at me kindly, and all the others with malicious curiosity. One of them, with thick lips and a dark, haughty face, even made a scornful grimace. . . . The hussy! I, too, made a face at her.

The blonde is explaining something. She does not know that my heart aches with longing. Not a single friendly face. Only the dark young lady. Ah, the gripping pain! And why must I work when I want to study? Now I will have to come here every day, every day. And perhaps all my life, until my very death.

May 4

Yesterday I could not, after all, screw up my courage to ask for the ration-card. And today I failed again.

And yet, last night, as soon as I came back from work, papa asked:

"Did you get the card?"

And he looks at me as if he has thrown a thousand-ton load off his shoulders. And within me boils a burning hatred of his gray, dull eyes, his thin, emaciated face.

"No."

"Why?"

"I forgot."

"You forgot? But you do not forget to eat, do you? And I have no more bread for you. I'm hungry myself."

My teeth gritted in rage. I could hear the sound and was suddenly sorry for myself. And this is a father! He is ready to see his own daughter starve. Lord, what does it mean? I do not understand anything. So miserly. So greedy. I hate him, I hate him, I hate him.

That was yesterday.

And this morning I awoke and did not find my usual slice of bread on the table. He . . . he did not leave it.

I stood at the table, petrified. My bread should be there, and it is not there.

My tears began to fall on the table. The room swam as if in a mist. I grabbed my hat and ran to work.

The streets are full of other people's joy, the spring sun, the far-away blue sky, and warmth. The spring breeze blew in my face and it made me think of the undried tears under my eyes. Everybody is running, hurrying somewhere—their faces are lively and joyous. And nobody takes any notice of me. I look at everybody, but nobody looks at me. Ah, how I wish mother would come sooner! And where are they all hurrying to? Have they had enough to eat, or what is it?

I came running an hour before the time. No one else was there as yet. The Post Office is huge and still. No bustling within. From the second floor balcony it looks entirely like a desert. The white, tiled floor glistens. Straight and smooth, it seems to have expanded, because no hurrying feet are on it.

And my heart contracted in the emptiness, stillness, and hugeness. I leaned against a column and cried.

Suddenly I begin to listen intently. Footsteps. Ah, it is a solitary young lady, approaching with lonely steps through the stillness. Nothing in the world will make me greet her first. . . .

The dark young lady was the first to greet me. She stopped close beside me and silently cast her eyes down. She rested her soft, rather weak chin upon her palm. We stand there, without a word.

Nine o'clock. The Post Office is opened to the public. There must have been a large crowd waiting outside. One can see from above how they rush in and scatter over the white floor, like black beetles. My tears no longer flow. Bustle, talk, clatter. The pounding of a rubber-stamp sounded from one of the little windows. And my heart grew still heavier.

Eh, what? The dark young lady is saying something:

"If I am not mistaken, you haven't been signing your name in the register?"

"Oh, yes. . . . No. . . . And is it necessary?"

"It is. The book is downstairs at the dispatcher's. They will deduct from your pay."

There you are! And I do not even know where the office is. Mitya did not tell me about it.

The dark young lady guessed my difficulties. She tactfully offered to show me where the office is. How good and friendly she seems to be.

On the way we fell to talking. Her name is Marusya. We came back together to our office and began our work.

At twelve o'clock a boy runs into the office and yells at the top of his voice:

"Peas and lentils! . . . Peas and lentils!"

I don't understand what this means, but all at once I realize that I am hungry. I had had nothing to eat that morning. Marusya looks at me with a smile and explains:

"He means in our dining-room. It's for our dinner; now."

That is so,—for dinner. Just like yesterday, everybody ran at once to the dining-room. Marusya again takes out some bread and butter. Quite unexpectedly she asks:

"Fea Alexandrovna, why don't you eat?"

Marusya spoke, and then became embarrassed. My cheeks blaze with hot color. Even the tips of my ears tingle.

"I forgot my lunch today. . . ."

Marusya holds a piece of bread in each hand and does not dare to raise her eyes.

"Perhaps . . . perhaps I could offer you a slice? I have two."

"Oh, no, no. I'm not a bit hungry."

"But really, take a piece, Fea Alexandrovna."

"No, no, thank you. I . . . I can't take it."

And the tears sounded in my voice. We both sit, red-faced, and avoid looking at each other. And suddenly my mouth began to water. My jaws moved. I grit my teeth to check them. But I cannot, I cannot.

Marusya says again:

"But take it, Fea, do. I do not know how to ask. Take it, Feechka."

She cautiously put one piece before me. What a dear, good, kind soul. And I will never, never be able to pay her back. How can I take it? Tears welled up in my eyes from hunger and from something else.

"Thank . . . thank you . . . Marusya."

And all day she helped me with my work. A dear, kind, good soul!

May 5

Even today I could not screw up my courage to go to the man in charge, for my card. And today, too, papa stood firm and did not leave me my morning slice of bread. For two days in succession I have not eaten anything from morning till seven o'clock in the evening. And at night nothing but rotten beets and potatoes and herring. Once I wondered that Alexander could eat rotten beets, and now I eat them myself.

I went to work today and for the first time I felt dizzy. At home I hurried straight to the mirror and began to gaze at my face. How thin and pale it has become. Lord, papa will starve me before mother comes!

May 6

At last I received my card.

Now I get half a pound of bread daily. The rations are handed out every other day. Today the boy brought me a whole pound at once. I ate it on the spot. I was ashamed before the others for eating all of the bread, but I could not control myself. And I am still hungry.

Accidentally I opened the drawer of the table, and I became frightened. Again there is a piece of buttered bread inside it. I felt hot all over.

"What . . . what is this, Marusya?"

Her dark-brown eyes do not look at me, but by the movement of her eyelashes I see that they are smiling.

"Nothing, Fea."

"I cannot, I cannot. . . ."

"Take it, really, I have enough."

The bread lies in a corner of the drawer and temptingly glistens with savory butter. I look from the bread to Marusya, and back again. Something flutters from her thick eyelashes to the lower part of her face. But she does not look at me in order not to embarrass me still more. And though I have a heavy, humiliating, bitter feeling—still I take the bread. For I am so torturingly hungry. How kind and good she is! She might take it into her head to slip some bread in there every day.

In my heart I decided that I would accept it only every other day.

Papa grows more and more harsh each day. It is a terrible misfortune for him that the supply of herring and beets has been completely ruined. Even he was compelled to throw it away. He never sends me to the store to buy things. He always does the shopping himself. He brings his purchases and locks them away. It seems that now he does not trust anybody in the whole world. How will mama get along with him, when she comes? He walks about, gloomy, shut in, stern, and seems to have grown thinner and even more dried up. I'm afraid to remain alone with him in the evenings.

I always leave for work without having had tea or bread. But on the day when I get bread at the Post Office I suffer only slightly from hunger, but the day after—very much.

I wish mama would hurry and come.

May 8

Nikolai Pavlovich also works at the Post Office. I met him today in the dining room.

For dinner today we had nothing but herring. Those who have bread eat it in the dining room; those who have none, take the herring home.

And I, while I was carrying it from the window through which it is distributed, could hardly refrain from sinking my teeth into it. I hurry to the table, holding with two fingers the herring suspended by its head. I watch its tail swing, and the muscles back of my ears quiver and hurt in anticipation.

I am hungry, hungry.

At last I am at the table. I scarcely wait to clean the skin, and I eat the herring from the middle, without a knife. I held it with both hands, and suddenly I was startled:

"Good afternoon, Fea Alexandrovna!"

Ah, it is Nikolai Pavlovich! At once I blushed to the tips of my ears. Shame, shame, that he has surprised me in such a hungry moment. "What a hungry wretch!" he will think. "She eats herring without bread. Just tears it with her teeth."

"You're eating herring? Well, and I take mine home, you know. Here, I have wrapped it up in paper. And my sister will prepare it at home."

I drop my herring. It falls straight on the table. I do not know what to say.

"Well, how have you been?"

His voice is encouraging. Inside I am burning with shame. He has noticed, he has noticed that I eat without bread . . . tearing it with my teeth. I say indifferently:

"Very well, thank you."

"Have you enrolled for the lectures yet?"

"Well, I've had no time as yet, you know. I went once or twice to the theater. . . . To a party at a friend's house. . . . It is jolly in Petrograd after the country, isn't it?"

And meanwhile I look sidewise at the herring. . . . Lord, the whole tail is still left. And there is some flesh even in the middle. So tasty! I feel just like gnawing it all up. . . .

But my hand shoves it aside, carelessly.

"Fie, Nikolai Pavlovich, what a bad dinner we had today. It's impossible to eat it. An awful dining room, you know. . . . And I'll be sure to enroll for the lectures. Only, I don't know where."

"I'll gladly propose you."

"Please, please do. I shall be very glad."

We walked out of the dining room together. He always speaks to me in a peculiarly earnest manner. Why does he take my education so much to heart? He is a good, fine man.

Within me a desire burns like fire: to study, study, study. First to the lectures, then to the University. Higher education. But I went back to the office, sat down at my table, and my heart began to ache heavily. Lord, it is not my lot, not my lot! As it is, for the last few days I have been as if half-dead. A constant apathy. At home I lie on my bed all the time. I shall not have enough strength. And there is no relief in sight.

I ran out to the dressing room and burst into tears.

May 9

I came from work and spent the rest of the day lying on my bed. How strange! There is no desire to think of anything. Even the memories of Frenev

glide through my thoughts and do not reach the heart.

May 10

I am miserable enough as it is, when along comes another misfortune!

Somehow it happened that yesterday they clipped two coupons off my dining-room card, instead of one. This means I will have no dinner today. And I won't get bread until tomorrow.

In the dining room I approach as usual the young lady in charge. I present my card.

"There is no dinner for you. You've had yours and now you want it again. . . . You are not supposed to get it twice."

The young lady looks contemptuously at me, and I gaze at her, frightened. I do not grasp the idea. Heavens, it seems that she is accusing me of trying to steal a second dinner! How dare she? I shout so loudly that everybody turns to stare at me:

"Are you mad? Why is there no dinner for me?"

"It's plain enough. You are not supposed to dine twice. Pass on. Don't hold up the line."

And suddenly she probably understood by my forlorn face that I am innocent. She says more softly:

"You have no coupon. They must have cut off two by mistake yesterday."

I walk away. The young lady, with a suggestion of guilt in her voice, grumbles after me that it is not her fault—she was not on duty yesterday. And black fear is gnawing at my heart. The whole, whole day I shall be hungry. Never before had I experienced such a fear of hunger. It is even stronger than hunger itself.

And at the office they ask me as usual:

"Well, did you like the dinner, Fea Alexandrovna?"

"Bah, what junk! I didn't care to eat today. And . . . and imagine: yesterday they cut off two coupons instead of one. It's good luck that the dinner is so bad. I'm not sorry in the least."

I came home so weakened that I could not prepare the hot water for papa. I lie on my bed and my head feels all empty. There is not a single thought left. Even the constant irritation against papa has burned out. I close my eyes and my head begins to swim slowly. And I seem to be too tired to breathe. I don't move a single limb.

And suddenly, I don't know why, I jumped up and walked to the mirror. With terrible eyes I look at my face and I seem to be on the verge of remembering something.

But I looked and looked and remembered nothing. Again I walked slowly to the bed.

Papa comes. Looks about him. There is no hot water on the table.

"Have you prepared hot water?"

"No."

"Why?"

"I'm hungry."

Immediately a dull irritation passes over his face.

"We all eat the same. Didn't you have dinner?"

"No."

"How's that?"

And he looks at me attentively. I feel dull hatred rising up within me because of this unpleasant look. Does he really think I am lying? What a man!

"They cut two coupons off my card yesterday."

I see that he believes me. But he grows even more angry.

"Deuce take you for a muddle-head! You must

keep your eyes open. If you keep on like this they'll chop off your head and you won't know it!"

I have no strength to reply—I turn my face to the wall.

I hear him behind me, pacing the room. He walked to and fro for a while. Then he stopped.

"It's a pity. And I haven't any bread myself today."

I keep silent.

He resumed his pacing to and fro, with irritated, stamping steps.

"And have you no bread left, none at all?"

I turned at once as though he had given me a jolt. I began to speak with quick hatred:

"And you . . . don't you know? I always eat up my bread at once. So why do you ask?"

"Well, then . . . stay hungry."

But his tone is already uncertain. Yes, yes! He stops and says with a pitiful, changed face:

"I have . . . about two pounds of white flour. Make some pancakes."

It seems as if it is not I, but my weary heart that hears these words. But instead of gratitude I am seized with a mad hatred that almost drives me into convulsions. I rise without a word and go to the kitchen. He follows me like a shadow and mutters confusedly:

"I got it for Easter. . . . I thought—when mother comes . . . and I will gladden her with nice white flour. Boil the water now."

And strange,—the last sentence knocked at my heart and there is no more hatred in it. . . . Poor, poor papa. It is not from happiness that he has become like this. He used to be kind and generous.

In the kitchen he brought me the flour and told me

to prepare it. Then he suddenly changed his mind:

"Hold on; let me do it myself, for you'd be likely to put all of it in."

Strange to say, I was amused. I looked at his distressed face, laughed good-humoredly, and went back to our bedroom.

In about five minutes he shouts:

"Feiush, Feiush, what's the matter? It's turned out mighty thin."

I ran to him and burst out laughing as I had not laughed for a long time. He had used about a pound of flour and had poured in water enough for at least three pounds. I say through my laughter:

"There, God has punished you. Now it will make nothing. You'll have to put in all the flour."

And papa, also laughing:

"Devil take it . . . devil take it . . . there, knead it yourself."

I am already frying pancakes, and he keeps walking about me. He glances over my shoulder at the frying-pan, sniffs, and walks about me again.

And suddenly he cannot restrain himself:

"Feiusha, hurry up, finish 'em . . . hot ones!"

Our eyes met and at once we began to smile—he and I.

"Just a minute, daddy, there'll be hot ones in a minute."

But, O Lord, O Lord. . . . How thin his face is! I had noticed it before. The temple bones and jaws barely seem to be covered by the shriveled skin.

And he himself is shrunken, bony, thin. His arm extends out of his sleeve, so meager, skinny. And blue veins run along the pale skin. And upon a thin hand is a long palm ending in sharp, bony fingers. It makes me afraid. . . . His palm with the fingers is

broad, like a rake, and it is all yellow, shriveled, and dry. . . . Heavens, and his mustache is even more terrible! Thin. Matted. And, for some reason, always wet. How is it that I did not notice it before? God, how sorry I am for papa! . . . And how many wrinkles there are on his forehead! Deep, heavy. They stretch all the way across the forehead. And his hair is thinned out in front. And once it was so thick. God, what is the matter with him? What is the matter? Oh, and his eyes, his eyes! Like the eyes of a man tortured to death.

"Well, well, come on with the hot ones. . . ."

"Here they are, daddy."

"How many for each of us?"

"Seven apiece, daddy; eat."

Heavens! I am all atremble with horror, but I assume a cheerful face. And instead of my full portion, I took for myself only two pancakes and gave him seven. And, thank God, he did not notice that I deceived him.

May 13

Sunday again.

This is the third Sunday that I have been living here, yet it seems that an eternity has already passed, gray and dull.

I woke up in the morning and I remembered papa. I hastened at once to the mirror and for a long time gazed at my face. I forgot altogether to think of papa. Then my head began to go round; I wilted from fatigue and from a great weakness in my limbs, and lay down again.

All day I lay there—now opening my eyes, now closing them. I thought of nothing—my mind was a blank.

May 14

And how strangely I act at my place of work! It is quite a while since I made the acquaintance of everybody there, but I have become friendly only with Marusya.

The time before dinner passes slowly, slowly. . . . I wish the dinner hour would come sooner. It will be easier, after. I will, at least, have had something to eat. And I am in mortal fear that someone will notice that I am hungry. I joke, I laugh, I chatter, and my heart aches and there is a pain in my stomach. Something is gnawing within. But I make fun with particular spitefulness of those who start conversation about food. One likes this, another that, a third something else. And I laugh at them. I call them animals, who think only of food. And in the depth of my soul I do not know whether in those moments I am sincere or not. It seems to me that I am.

After dinner I revive a little. I try to think of Frenev. Lord, how insensible I have become! Why does May seem so gray and sad to me? Nikolai Pavlovich says that one should study. I know myself that this is so. Yes, yes, today I will by all means go to enroll for the lectures. This very evening.

And now I am at home. Dirty walls, and a floor once painted, but now the paint is worn away in spots. Low ceilings; in the corners remnants of winter mildew and cobwebs. Everything is suddenly erased from the soul: the Post Office, and the evening street in Maytime. I stare wearily into the mirror at my pale, emaciated face.

Now I examine it every day. Elena Ilinichna, our office manager, says that I have become attractive. I do not care. I lie down on my bed and wait for papa. I manage to prepare the hot water in time

for his arrival. We have supper together. And then I lie down again. The room has grown dark, and papa is already snoring. But I stay awake for a long time. I stare into the dark corner where, like a black, indistinct shadow, papa's overcoat hangs, and I think about nothing,—nothing at all.

May 15

Today we are rushed with work at the office. I hardly managed to get through by eleven o'clock. And since morning I have had no bread, only a noon-meal in the dining room. And that consisted of vegetable soup, and nothing more. Practically water, of course.

Step by step I drag my feet along the darkened, warm streets. They seem to be overflowing with people. The cigarettes of the promenaders flare up in the twilight of the white night. Merry words buzz in my ears. But I see nothing clearly, hear nothing clearly. My head swims and I feel the pain of the beating of my heart.

I stopped on Nikolaevski Bridge and became absorbed in gazing at the water. I rested my body against the iron rail, and closed my eyes. At once my head began to spin. And a new pain made itself felt, right above my eyebrows.

I opened my eyes and they happened to fall upon the green signal light under the bridge. Farther on, a red light. God, what if I threw myself into the water? Who would be sorry for a silly little thing like me? Papa is harsh and stingy. He would rejoice at having got rid of an extra mouth. And that is all. And, anyhow, I am likely to die of hunger.

Something splashed below. I could see circles spread over the bright surface of the water. It must have been the splashing of a big fish. No, no, I

cannot! There are big fishes. They will suck at my body. And black lobsters. Uh, how disgusting! . . . I cannot. . . . I lack courage. . . . I am a real coward. Just a silly little thing. And at home they are all asleep. Mitka and Tonka don't care in the least for me. Papa, too, will not wait up for me. He must be snoring already. If someone would at least put up the samovar and get the tea ready. There's no one, no one. . . .

I rang the door-bell for a long time. . . . Surely, surely, they are all asleep. Nobody cares a bit about me. And suddenly, a voice. . . .

I started. I had hardly told myself whose voice it is, and my heart already began to beat and to flutter like mad.

"Mama, mama, mother dearest. . . . It's I, Fea!"

"Feechka, my own, how are you? How are you, my daughter?"

I sob convulsively on her neck. Oh, mama, mama, my dear, dear mother! And through my tears I feel that mother is alarmed.

"Now, what is the matter? Feechka, my own daughter, what is it? One must rejoice and not cry. Come into the room."

"Oh, mother, mother dear! How hard it is to live without you! I will never again live without you, never, never!"

"Well, well, calm yourself, my dear, my good daughter. It's all over now, all over. Better sit down and have something to eat."

Ah, on the table there is pot-cheese in a little keg, and mushrooms, and country bread. And mother has made some tea for me. I eat, stuffing my mouth full, intermingling food with words and tears.

"Oh, mama, how stingy and harsh he has grown!

How hard it is to live without you! Tonka scolds and grumbles at papa and at me, too. I will not live without you again."

"Eat, eat, my dear."

"And papa has grown filthy. It's from hunger, isn't that so, mother dear?"

"Yes, I have noticed it. I can't understand what has come over him. And how he met me and Borka! One couldn't tell whether he was glad or not that we came."

"He is not glad, my mother; he is not. And is Borka asleep already? He didn't even wait to see me. And how did papa meet you?"

"Well, it was like this. We come, Borka and I, and Tonya opens the door. Well, you know, she begins at once: 'Mama, mamochka, how are you?' "

"And she didn't cry?"

"No, nothing of the sort. She only said: 'At last you've come, mamochka,' and that was all."

"Most likely she hadn't even looked forward to your coming."

"Well, listen. We take off our things and he comes out of his room. And one couldn't tell whether he is glad or not. . . . 'Ah,' he says, 'so you've come, mother! Well, how are you?' And there isn't the slightest expression on his face. Nothing at all. I was so hurt, so hurt, daughter mine. But I did not show it. Let him be as he is."

Tears roll from mama's dear eyes. I jump up and embrace her.

"Mother dear, don't cry, don't cry."

"But it hurts so, daughter."

Ah, will I have to defend mama against him? I thought to myself: "And what if he is not asleep and hears it all?"

"Mamochka, is he asleep?"

"Snoring, long ago."

And mama gesticulated so comically, so comically with her hand—it is red, as if scalded, from washing clothes—and she wrinkled up her face even more comically. Her nose breaks into creases and the bridge is all wrinkles. I am seized with a desire to kiss it. And her eyebrows crease; they're scanty, black, and worn-looking. And her hand, though red, is small and well-shaped. And her fingers are thin, with nice little pads at the tips.

"Oh, mamochka, dear, he starves Shura. Shura is now working at the Hotel Europe. He hasn't been to see us yet, not once."

"All right all right, girlie. Now everything will be well. Now undress; go to bed. You must be tired."

"And it is so dull at the office. Alexander Andreich is not so bad, but Zaitsev is a real fool. He's the assistant, you know. I have only one girl friend there. . . . She is so good. . . . She gives me bread and butter."

"Sleep, sleep, my own. God bless you."

Mama makes the cross over me, kisses my forehead, and I enfold her soft, warm neck with my arms.

"Mamochka, dear, how happy I am now."

"Well, well, sleep—God be with you."

"And Nikolai Pavlovich came over to me. He is so skinny, so pale, with red eyes, but he is good. He keeps saying: 'One must study, Fea, one must study.' "

"Well, he was always a good soul."

"And Frenev will write to me. . . . You mustn't be angry, mother dear, that we kissed at Vologda. Only once, and even that by my own wish."

"Well, well, sleep, my own—you must be tired."

"And soon, the day after tomorrow, I get my first

pay. Four hundred roubles for half a month. I can imagine how glad papa will be. He didn't even give us money for tooth-powder. I'll give all the money to you. I don't want to give it to him."

"Oh, you foolish child! Don't I have to take money from him for all our expenses? Well, sleep, sleep; God bless you."

"I, mamochka, don't love him the least bit any more, and you I love more than ever."

"All right, all right, girlie."

"And will you wake me up tomorrow at eight?"

"Yes, yes, sleep now."

"And will there be tea tomorrow morning, mamochka?"

"Why, certainly; would I let you go without tea?"

"Good night, mamochka."

"Sleep, my own."

May 16

I wake up because Borka shakes me by the shoulder and shouts right into my ear:

"Feiusha, Fea, Fea, Feiusha, get up. . . . I've come. . . . Oh, mama, Feiushka's mooing in her sleep."

"Borka darling!"

"At last! You've opened your eyes! A nice time to snooze! I've come!"

And, his little face beaming, he reaches toward me with kisses.

"Oh, mamochka, the samovar is ready! Good! For the first time in my life I'll have tea before going to work."

I eat bread with my tea. Not just a little bit, but as much as you can wish. And mama also gives me some bread to take along.

I burst into the office like a bomb-shell. I can feel that my face is wearing a stupid smile, from ear to ear.

I shout in such a ringing voice that I wonder at it myself:

"Good morning, Elena Ilinichna."

"Good morning, good morning, sweetie. Why is sweetie so jolly today?"

"Oh, Elena Ilinichna, mama has come!"

"Ah, mama? From the country I suppose? She has brought something? Yes?"

"Yes, yes . . . nothing special. A keg of mushrooms, some pot-cheese, a little butter, and some biscuits."

"Biscuits? You're lucky, sweetie. . . . I love tea and biscuits."

"Oh, Elena Ilinichna, shall I? I will bring you some tomorrow."

"Oh, no, sweetie, thanks."

"Honor bright, I will, Elena Ilinichna."

"No no, you're talking nonsense."

"Why, Elena Ilinichna, you *must* take it. Since I love you, you must, you must, you must! . . . It won't be nice if you don't take it."

"There, there, sweetie. These days people do not stand treat. It's such hard times. . . . Everything is so dear. . . ."

"Elena Ilinichna, you must. I don't care a fig about the hard times. I'll bring it, and that's all there is to it."

"All right, all right; now get to work, sweetie."

I sit down at the table. Oh, and Marusya too. How kind she looks! Just looks and smiles.

"Oh, Marusya, how happy I am! And mama said that Serezha is coming soon."

"And who is Serezha?"

"He's my brother. He was in the country on a furlough. Oh, how clever he is! Awfully good and very clever."

"And is he handsome?"

"In my opinion, he is. Tall. Such a dark face, you know."

"I like dark men."

"He has no mustache or beard. And his lips are wonderful when he smiles. . . . There is such a dimple,—right here. And his smile is so kind and good. A very attractive face. One can see at a glance —an intellectual man."

"And is he educated?"

"Yes, he is . . . well, like everybody. And then he is constantly attending lectures. . . . He also knows English, French, and German. And when he was at the front he was always in charge. He has been organizing various locals for the Department of Education. And he understands everything, and everybody. It's simply wonderful how he understands me. All, all of me. I love him madly."

"And what kind of nose has he?"

"His nose is like mine. . . . Oh, no, that's not true. Mine is like a potato."

"Oh, no, Fea; in profile your nose is not like a potato."

"No, no; you don't understand. It's like mine in length only. It's neither narrow nor broad. Just medium. . . . A Russian nose, in short. But in general Serezha's face is not Russian."

"Whom does he look like?"

"He looks like a French airman."

"What do you mean, like an airman? There are all kinds of airmen. And then, how old is he?"

"Well, what shall I say? . . . I don't really know. Twenty-five or twenty-two, or twenty-three. And his trousers are—round and full, like bottles. He is so tall, and he wears a soldier's jacket. His mustache is just coming out—black."

"I'd like to see him."

"Oh, Marusya. Really, you know, he can't be called beautiful. But I don't care for such a dudish mustache, you know. And such rosy cheeks. You don't like them yourself, do you?"

"You're right; I don't care for them."

"He . . ."

Heavens, how I chatter! Elena Ilinichna says:

"Well, sweetie, are you through? Get to work."

She is so mean, this Elena Ilinichna. And she craftily asked for biscuits a moment ago. . . . And now she won't let us talk.

"Oh, Elena Ilinichna, forgive me. I'm so happy today. And, you know, Frenev, too, is coming soon. You know, Marusya, I'm really in love with him. . . ."

"All right, all right, Feechka; let's work now. Elena Ilinichna is angry."

"You're right, Marusya; to work, yes. . . ."

And mama will make the tea when I get home. Ah, how happy I am! And tomorrow morning tea again. Oh, my dear, dear mamochka! You do not know how I suffered here. It is so good now.

May 17

Today I received my first pay. Four hundred roubles for half a month.

And I was not a bit glad when Tiurin, our treasurer, gave me the bills. It was unpleasant to put them in my pocket. It was as if they tied me to my pocket. And now, when they are lying there, I feel that they

are alive and moving. Papa, of course, will be very pleased. He will say that this is my first money, independently earned, that it must be guarded, etc. How unpleasant it all is!

And at home, for some reason, I kept delaying to give them to papa. I sat down to eat and was conscious of the bills in my pocket. It is, somehow, difficult for me to say that I received money. At last I say sulkily:

"Here is the money . . . pay-day. . . ."

"A-a-ah, good girl! How much?"

"I don't know. Count them yourself."

Papa does not seem to notice my tone. So neatly that it is just disgusting, he folds each bill separately, and puts all of them carefully in an even pile, and then into a large, black purse.

"Good girl, good girl. Remember, this is your first money independently earned. You too are glad, I imagine? He-he-he."

May 18

Mama's coming produced no effect whatever upon papa. It would seem just the contrary. He found an excuse today and separated his bread ration from us completely. Separated! . . . What a terrible word, and how it chills the heart!

Serezha was expected today. I was already putting on my hat to go to work when somebody rang the bell.

We didn't expect Serezha so early. Mama went calmly to open the door. And suddenly I trembled from head to foot at her joyful outcry, "Serezhenka!"

I had no time to put on my hat, and holding it in my hand I rushed to the kitchen. And Serezha, in a gray soldier's coat, stands in the middle of the kitchen and smiles.

"Serezha, Serezha, how glad I am! . . ."

"Do not rejoice too much; tonight I leave for the front. . . ."

"Oh, Serezha, couldn't you go the day after tomorrow?"

"Impossible. Denikin will take Moscow."

And he keeps turning his eyes from mama to me, and then to Borya, and smiles without end. Then, looking at my hat, he asks:

"Fea Alexandrovna is on her way to work?"

"Yes, yes, I've been working a long time. You can't imagine how I hate to go today."

For a long time I chatted with him about all kinds of nonsense. And he kept listening with his soft smile and moved his red lips. And at the office I talked to Maruska about him all day long.

I went home with a feeling of heaviness in my heart. I knew that he had already gone away. Mama met me with tear-stained eyes. It must be because Serezha has gone away. No, her face wears a peculiarly upset look. Lord, what has happened?

"Mother dear, what makes you look that way?"

"Well, never mind."

Mama waved her hand in such a way that my heart suddenly began to ache.

"Mamochka, mamochka, what has happened to you,—tell me."

"Well, I have quarreled with father."

Mama begins to tell about it, with tears in her eyes:

"Because of Serezha. It really hurts. I was seeing him off. Well, I put up a samovar and cut off a piece of bread for each of us. And it was the last of the bread. Of course, I left his share for him. But when he came he began to quarrel. I told him that there

were three of us and that each had eaten but a small piece. And he says, 'Starting with tomorrow I keep my share separate from yours. I work more than all of you,' says he, 'and get more bread, and you eat it all up.' Well, what was there for me to say? 'Keep it separate,' said I, 'and may you be happy.' "

The tears are welling up in my eyes, too. But they are not the impotent, pitiful tears of mortification, but the tears of anger and of burning hatred. I console mama, kiss her, but my lips cry out without my wishing it:

"Egoist, egoist! Heartless egoist! I hate him! Serezha is going to the front, and he grudges him bread! He has hurt mama. He thinks only of himself. That is the kind of man he is, mother! I told you."

Suddenly our eyes met, and I stopped. How terrible her eyes look! My own fire burns in them. Lord, it seems we are going to hate him together!

A shudder ran through my body. I started away from mama, retreated to a corner, and covered my eyes with my hands.

I do not understand what is going on within my soul. But it is overcharged with burning, irreconcilable hatred.

May 20

The supplies that mama brought will last only for three more days. My heart shrinks in fear of the future.

Papa sullenly follows every piece that we put into our mouths, and I almost choke over it. But he says nothing. He won't give any of us even the smallest bit of his bread. And he gets one and three-quarter pounds, while I get only half a pound, and mama half a

pound; Borya gets five-eighths of a pound. We three often share our bread with one another. Mama and Borya get their bread from the city stores, and, lately, after long delays. It is fortunate that I get my bread regularly.

I do not know what mama's feeling is, but it seems to me that a certain bond is being established between her and me and Boris. And this bond is directed against papa. And papa feels it.

I fear,—I fear to think of it.

May 21

We are planning to move to new lodgings. It is very crowded for the four of us to live in one room. Besides, it is necessary to move on account of Tonka. Every day mama has a bitter quarrel with her. Never before have I met such a hard and malicious person as Tonka. I think that she envies us simply because we have supplies. But they have enough without these supplies, haven't they?

May 22

This is all, all. . . .

We are finishing up the last handful of flour that mama brought. This means that we will have to exist on our rations alone, and often, for three or four days at a stretch, no bread is issued on the cards.

Lord, how will we live?

For a whole week I have had enough to eat every day,—but now, now?

May 27

Hunger, hunger, hunger.

Papa, it seems, earns 1200 roubles per month, and I another 800. We both get a dinner at the dining

room, besides a bread ration. This is very little. One can die of hunger in a week.

Yesterday papa and mama had a long, painful conference. How shall we exist, how shall we exist? It was decided to buy every day two pounds of potatoes and a pound of beets. But this costs two hundred and fifty roubles, and that means seven thousand five hundred roubles per month. Mama suggested that we gradually sell our possessions. Papa pressed his hands to his temples, in agony, and for a long time was silent. Then he said in a hoarse voice:

"All right then, mother, let's sell. O Lord, O Lord!"

Then a shudder ran down his long, narrow back. Papa raised his head and looked mama in the eyes. I did not see his eyes because his back was turned to me, but they must have looked terrible. Tears were rolling from mama's eyes.

"Perhaps God will help us in some way. Vanya promised to send a parcel."

Papa waved his hand hopelessly and began to count out the money.

"Here, mother, this is for tomorrow. Buy as we decided."

I sat in a corner and saw everything. I did not cry, for I had no tears. But in another corner Boris cried bitterly.

I turned away, and with an empty heart, unconsciously, fell to staring at our old clock, which can go only when it hangs obliquely. The pendulum was beating: tick-tock, tick-tock. . . .

I stared for a long time, and still the tears would not come. But when I went to bed and hid my head under the blanket, they began to flow. My pillow was all wet with them.

May 28

This morning mama went to the market to sell her dress. Mama has four dresses in all. Before leaving she laid them out on the table and spent a long time deciding which was to go. She shook her head, sighed, and wiped away her tears. She selected the dark blue one.

We walked out together: she to the market and I to work.

On the way I had an attack of dizziness.

May 30

At the office I never show that I am hungry. I am always laughing, joking, chatting. But today Maruska suddenly looked at me strangely and asked:

"What makes you so grouchy these days, Feika?"

I was frightened at this question, but I raised my eyes indifferently:

"I'm not grouchy in the least. What makes you think I am?"

But all of them unexpectedly chimed in, in a chorus:

"Yes, grouchy, grouchy."

"It's written on her face. . . ."

"She's in love. . . ."

"Feika, tell us, whom are you in love with?"

And dark rage against them rises within me. I darted a glance at their curious faces and screamed in a terrible, shrill voice:

"Let me alone! For Heaven's sake let me alone!"

I threw a penholder at one of them and ran out to the dressing room. I heard behind me:

"Some sweetie!"

"A good for nothing!"

"Mean!"

God, they do not know that I am hungry.

June 1

Terrible news. Beginning with today there is to be a reduction in the bread ration.

My heart seemed to stop when I was told of it, and then began to beat so fast that it pained and ached desperately.

Papa's ration was reduced just a little. On his citizen's card he will get three-quarters of a pound per day, instead of a pound. The "armored" half a pound per day remains unchanged. But mama and I will get only half a pound every other day. Borya, five-eighths of a pound every two days.

How, then, will we manage to keep alive?

June 2

At last we have moved to our new lodgings.

The entire time before we moved I was oppressed by a heavy sensation. It seemed to me, somehow, that we would all die of hunger in our new lodgings. But papa persisted stubbornly, and we moved.

Mama, too, did not wish to go. But now that it has been done, she bustles about energetically and arranges her nest. She says that it is a good thing that Tonka is no longer with us. And still I have that heavy foreboding. The rooms are small and low. The windows are tiny, and the whole place is dirty and gloomy. The wallpaper is gray, faded, spotted with the stains of crushed bedbugs. And something gray and dreary crawls into one's soul from these gray and dreary walls.

June 3

The reduction of the bread ration and the fact that papa's "fixed" ration remained untouched, united us still closer against papa. We make a constant effort

to hide our hatred within us, but it is of no avail. Slowly, against our will, we haunt him with gloomy looks, feelings, thoughts, movements. He separates from us more and more.

Mama even refuses to sleep with him in the same bed. He has lice.

But I know that the lice are not the cause.

June 5

We are already beginning to sell the bed linen. In that way we are able every day to buy two pounds of potatoes and a pound of beets or cabbage. At night mama prepares with these a pottage-mess for all of us. I look forward greedily to eating it, but I eat it with disgust. Every day the same pottage, pottage, pottage.

Our home life has again taken the same form as before mama's coming. I come from work and I lie down on my bed. I lie there till the stew is ready. I eat, and lie down again.

Frequently, as I used to do, I walk to the mirror and unconsciously gaze at my face for a long time. I see neither eyes nor nose. Something white and pale glimmers there, but my mind can grasp nothing.

Today, too, I approached the mirror. And suddenly I saw clearly the image of Boris in the mirror. Quite clearly I saw his reflection as he lay on the sofa. He had put his little hands under his head and was staring at some point on the ceiling. How thin and pale he is. I trembled from head to foot and remained silent. I dreaded to glance back and convince myself. Perhaps he is even worse in reality. How terrible he looks! Quite motionless. And his eyes are motionless. And then I am seized as with the ague: I see my own face. It is just as pale, and the eyes are mad.

This is from fright. Yes, yes, terror took hold of me, not for Borya but for myself. I understand, I understand. I am afraid that I shall die of hunger. Heavens, I am a real egoist . . . like papa! No, no, I am sorry for Borya too!

Without looking at Borya I ran to my bed and buried my face in the pillow.

June 7

It is the fourth day since bread was last distributed at the stores. We are left with only the Soviet dinner and our miserable pottage. Mama has been putting on a brave front, but when papa came in the evening and said: "There's nothing again,"—she seemed to shrivel, and her face looked haggard.

And last night I suddenly noticed that Boris was squatting in a corner and, covering his face with his hands, was sobbing so that his bony shoulders trembled. I glanced at him and . . . remained indifferent. I just couldn't bring myself to get up from the bed.

I turned to the wall and trembled in horror. Close, before my very eyes, a starved bedbug is crawling along the wall. Just like a dry leaf, and he can hardly move.

A terrible thought fluttered and trembled in my head. I want to grasp it, but I cannot. My teeth are chattering. I gaze as in a delirium upon the slowly crawling bedbug, and my mind is a blank. Then I suddenly jumped off my bed and rushed to Boris. . . .

"Borenka, Borenka, why are you crying?"

He is silent.

"Borya, Borya, tell me quick. . . . Do you want bread? Papa will bring some today."

"No. I don't want any. Papa gets half a pound extra at the factory."

My heart slipped down and tumbled somewhere into the void. The ceiling seemed to shake and the room was filled with mist. Papa has half a pound extra. . . . I hate him for that, too. . . .

I turned and slowly went back. I lay down with my face to the wall and vaguely realized that the bedbug was no longer there.

June 8

Today, at last, papa brought some bread. The dole for five days.

Mama's and Borya's cards are assigned to the supply station at father's factory. Papa brings his share already separated from mama's and Borya's. He wraps it in paper and locks it up in the cupboard.

June 10

Today we sold a napkin. At any rate, we have pottage every day. If not for the pottage we would surely be dead by this time. And at the office I still try to laugh, to joke, and to chatter.

June 12

Today we have again sold something. I do not know what. I pay no attention. At times despair seizes me. I wish this torture would end soon. . . . If only death came, or something! Shall I throw myself into the river? But, no, I cannot. I come from work in a tram over the Troitski Bridge. The Neva glistens in the sun. I can see through the window the little sparkling waves flowing toward the gulf. The Neva is beautiful, but still I cannot, I cannot throw myself into it.

June 15

O Lord, O Lord! Another cut in the bread ration. Now I am to get one-eighth of a pound per day,

mama the same, and papa half a pound on his citizen's card and also his "fixed" half pound. I hate him, my own father, for this extra half pound. How, then, are we going to keep alive? But at the office I am still gay. I wonder at it, myself. I feel that under my gaiety there lurks a great, dull emptiness, but the tongue keeps on saying something. I often hear my own words sounding as if from a fog, and almost do not understand them myself. Only a vague desire stirs within me: not to betray myself. They shall not know that I am hungry.

And at home I do not hide my complete stupefaction. Every moment I spend there I lie motionless on my bed. All the inner life has burned out. There is a constant dusk in my heart. At times I make painful efforts and try to think about Frenev. His last letter was from Moscow. He wrote that he would soon have to go to the front. After that not a single letter.

But even the thoughts of Frenev fail to arouse me. Nothing but a dull pain in the heart.

Anger against papa is growing in me, in mama, and in Borya. We . . . we deceive him now. A daughter and her mother cheat their own father and husband in order to steal an extra potato from him. Heavens, what we have come to! What shame! What horror!

And the worst of it is that I understand this shame not through my heart, but only through my reason. And in my heart nothing remains save the bitterness against my own father.

I come home from work, and while I am still taking off my things Borya hurries me. He is shaking feverishly with impatience. His skinny shoulders tremble, and his face looks quite old. He mutters incoherently:

"Come, Fea, quicker, quick. . . ."

This means that mama has sold something today

and has concealed a part of the money. For the stolen money she has bought two pound of potatoes and a pound of beets, and has cooked all this for us alone.

"Quick, quick. . . . Papa will come. . . ." We eat hastily, like thieves, with mean, frightened faces. Never mind, he has an extra half pound. . . . But Borya trembles more and more.

When we did this for the first time, I was conscious of a faint sense of shame. It is not right, not right—dishonest. Is he not hungry? And he is so tired; he has to walk seven versts to his work. And how he suffers. He sees it all, understands. But, God, has he not an extra half pound—half a pound! . . .

But we have already finished eating. Oh, how little! We need more, more. A whole lot more. We would eat up all of it.

The second, the third time, I ate without any remorse of conscience. Only for a moment a terrible thought flashed clearly through me:

"We are turning into beasts."

Yes, but has he not an extra half pound?

June 17

Memory is becoming strangely weakened. At home I forget what happened at the office, at the office—what happened at home. The Post Office is a huge, dull blur, and home is a huge, dull blur, and these two do not merge.

Tonight I rode on the tram from the Post Office and made an effort to recollect what the pleasant thing is that awaits me at home. I kept exerting my memory and at last I recalled:

"Oh, yes, mama planned to sell something today. This means that we are going to have potatoes tonight. We will eat."

Papa seems to feel that we are stealing from him and he keeps tab on mama more and more carefully. But mama lies splendidly, and yet I tremble with fear —what if he should guess! Then we will have no extra potatoes.

Lord, if only he does not guess!

June 18

As is usual in the Novaya Derernya, our house is surrounded by a porch. Today, as I approached the house, I noticed a military cap on the porch. It seemed to me strangely familiar, but I could not make the effort to recollect whose it was.

At the house they have apparently noticed my approach. Boris runs out on the steps and shouts:

"Fea, Fea, Serezha has come—he's brought flour."

Instead of answering I grabbed him by the shoulders and cried fiercely:

"Why, why do you fool me?"

"Honest, Fea, honest. . . ."

I screamed again, but with a different cry. I pushed Boris aside and ran into the room. It's true, it's true. Serezha sits at the table and smiles bitterly and softly at the same time, looking at me.

"Serezhenka!"

I rushed to him. I seized him convulsively by the hands and burst out crying. And he looks at me and says kindly:

"Well, cry a bit, cry. . . ."

Mama looks at me and laughs. So does Borya. Their faces are beaming. And my tears, too, are tears of joy.

Serezha stayed two days. He had been detailed to some place and on the way he came to see us. He brought but little flour: fifteen pounds in all, and noth-

ing else. But this does not matter. As usual his coming stirred me to the bottom. I talked to him endlessly about everything: about my work, about Marusya, about Frenev. For two days I took interest in everything and lived a full life.

June 21

Serezha left yesterday.

At once everything went as before. We had used up all of the flour while he was still with us. Those days flashed through my memory like a bright cinema film, and again everything is dark.

Again pottage, again potatoes stolen from papa. Everything as before.

June 23

Bread is being given out at infrequent intervals. Oftentimes we languish for three or four days without bread. And we keep on selling and selling. Mama says that soon there will be nothing more to sell.

How, then,—how are we going to keep alive?

June 30

It is seven days since bread was distributed. Every day pottage, pottage—and what we steal from papa. He receives regularly his "fixed" half pound, but we—we?

Tonight, coming from work, I could hardly drag myself home from the tram station, and I at once lay down on my bed. Within—a vast, gray emptiness. But somewhere deep in this emptiness kindles a vague hope that today, just today, he will bring bread—and for all the past days.

The bell rings.

I rise, swaying. Hasn't he brought it? Hasn't he

brought it? I suddenly turn cold at the sound of mama's terrible, piercing voice, filled with inexpressible, hungry torment:

"None again! What an accursed store is yours! We'll soon all of us drop from hunger!"

And the dull sound of papa's voice comes, angry, irritable, tortured:

"Why do you shout? Is it my fault? I am hungry myself. I get along on just half a pound."

And at once the infinite pain and despair in mama's voice are changed to beastly rage.

"You, at least, have half a pound! Half a pound, half a pound, half a pound, and we haven't even that much!"

I hear how, with malicious distinctness, she utters the syllables of this "half a pound". I, too, am suddenly seized with blind, unreasoning rage. I appear unexpectedly in the doorway and scream wildly into papa's pitiful, embarrassed face:

"Half a pound, half a pound, half a pound! It's all right for you to talk! You've an extra half a pound! And we, for seven days, nothing, nothing, nothing. . . ."

I long to pour out upon him all my accumulated, hungry rage. The words just bristle with cruelty. I can feel the terrible hatred burning in my eyes. And mama suddenly bursts forth with still greater madness:

"Half a pound, half a pound! It's all right for you to talk! And we, for seven days—nothing, nothing, nothing. . . ."

Mama has such a terrible face and such mad eyes that I, meeting them for a moment, became petrified. What is this? It is not right, not right. He cannot get bread—where is he to get it? But this is

the voice of reason and not of the heart. I am not in the least, not in the least sorry for him!

And he stands before us and looks like a cornered beast. A dull suffering shows in the sunken eyes. Convulsions distort the gray, emaciated face. There —angry sharp sparks flash in his eyes and fade out again. And again there is only torment and suffering in them.

He looks around. Like a cornered beast he gazes with agonized eyes at his wife and his daughter, and suddenly, waving his arm strangely, he sits down on a chair and lowers his head on his hands.

Turning to glance back at him, mama goes to the kitchen in order to bring the miserable pottage.

How I hate him, how I hate him for that half a pound!

July 1

Today, too, papa has brought no bread. Yesterday's scene repeated itself.

July 2

There is no bread today also.

July 3

None again.

July 4

Today papa said that there would be bread tomorrow. He gets his "fixed" half a pound every day. He eats a part of it at the factory and brings the rest home.

He does not share it with anybody, however, but eats it with the pottage.

July 5

It was not true. He brought no bread today.

We did not fall upon him with fierce frenzy, but

only questioned him silently with our eyes. In the same silent way he answered with a dull look of suffering: "No." And something like gratitude shone in this look, gratitude for our not torturing him. He does not know that we have no strength for it.

We sat down to the same miserable pottage. As usual, papa takes out of his pocket a little bit of bread. This is the remnant of the ill-fated half a pound. I wonder how he can stand it and not eat it at once. What an egoist? Even toward himself he is an egoist.

He cuts this piece, which is small enough as it is, into still smaller bits. Then he covers each bit thickly with salt. He never used to eat so much salt before. This is in order to drink more hot water. Then the stomach feels full.

He cut it up, salted it, and spread it before him. And Borya cannot restrain himself and devours the pieces with his hungry eyes.

Dear courageous boy! He can still find the strength to turn away. Why, of course! This is papa's half a pound. It is useless to ask. But he cannot restrain his tears. They are slowly trickling from his eyes.

And suddenly papa silently places one little piece before Borya.

He puts it there and avoids looking at Borya or at us. He lowers his eyes to the remaining pieces and carefully taps down the salt on them. Then he chews bread assiduously. But how strangely the tuft of hair on his lower lip trembles and bristles! Ah, how thin his mustaches have grown! They are wet and matted. And very little hair. And the lips are quite bloodless, and the face is pale, dry, all covered with wrinkles. And his temples, his temples! Where is papa's hair? And his hands? It is terrible to look at

them. . . . And his eyes. . . . O Lord, O Lord, poor papa. . . .

Dear papa, how sorry I feel for him. He gave Borya a piece of bread. He is kind. And he has nothing himself.

And Borya, without looking at the bit of bread, took it feebly, blinking with tear-filled eyes. Mama says in a trembling voice:

"There, there, don't cry; hasn't papa given you . . ."

We are all silent. Something invisible and good stretches from us to papa.

July 9

A strange sensation of physical lightness comes to me.

Most frequently it occurs in the mornings. When it is not accompanied by dizziness, it is almost pleasant. It requires no effort whatsoever to move one's feet. I walk on the pavement and do not notice that I am stepping upon rough stones. As if I were treading on down, or right on the air. And my bosom expands and my heart seems to be large, huge, but light, like a balloon.

And the pleasantest thing is that I can call forth this sensation at will. I only need to close my eyes and sigh deeply three or four times, and the lightness comes at once. Then it becomes impossible to think of anything.

But sometimes this sensation is accompanied by dizziness and it becomes necessary to sit down quickly. Once I tried to lie upon the bed, but the bed seemed to float away, and nausea took hold of me.

July 11

Alexander comes to us more and more often. Timid, lean, pale, with terrible, hungry eyes. A hungry one comes to another to eat.

And mama never repulses him and always makes him sit down to supper. But only mama. Papa looks askance at him and watches with a surly look Alexander eating the pottage. And Alexander is infinitely glad to have that pottage.

But I have grown so much worse, so much more heartless than papa. I understand very well why papa frowns, and I hate him for it. . . . He . . . he is ready to starve his own son. Egoist, egoist,—and that a father!

And yet I myself act toward Alexander in the same way, if not more harshly. And somehow I am at the same time sorry for him and hate him madly for coming and taking away from me a mouthful of the miserable pottage. I dare not lift my eyes to Alexander's, and I keep them lowered on my plate, but I grumble all the time so that he may hear:

"Lord, what people there are! We have nothing to eat as it is, and now . . ."

I dare not finish the sentence, because I know how it hurts Alexander. Let him pretend that he does not look at me, does not hear, does not understand. But I feel that he is consumed with pain, shame, and mortification. The spoon trembles in his hand. But hunger is stronger. Frightened, pitiable, he eats hastily.

Lately Alexander has fallen into the habit of coming almost every day. One can see that he is slowly dying of starvation. I understand this, but I cannot conquer myself and . . . I have stopped greeting him. I treat him worse and worse.

Yesterday he came—timid and pitiable as always. He made a miserable attempt to extend his hand to me. I passed by as if I had not noticed it.

And today . . . today I will tell him openly that

this cannot continue. He ought to be ashamed to deprive of food those who are almost starving. We ourselves are dying a slow death.

And he came.

Not daring to raise my eyes I passed by him to the kitchen, where mama was standing, and cried indignantly:

"Can it be, can it be, that he's here again?"

Mama, of course, always feels our disapproval of Alexander, and she suffers both for us and for him. Papa and I frown and grumble, and she keeps a guilty silence and does not dare to intercede for him. But this time she ventures to reply, and says with the same guilty expression:

"Stop screaming, for God's sake. Where is he to go?"

"No, no, no! This is impossible. He'll keep coming every day."

"I wish you would keep quiet, for heaven's sake."

"I don't mean to keep quiet; I don't want to, if people won't understand!"

Alexander unexpectedly appears in the doorway. What inexpressible suffering is on his dull face as he looks at me! As if a knife had slashed across my heart.

I did not say another word and passed into the dining room.

Nevertheless, Alexander sat down to supper.

July 13

I woke up today, and suddenly—red, blue, green spots whirled before my eyes.

I cried, frightened:

"Oh, mamochka, there's something wrong with my eyes . . . blue . . . green . . . red. I closed my

eyes—spots again. I opened my eyes again and the spots were dimmer."

And mama soothes me:

"Never mind, you silly; it's because you work near a bright light at the office."

And really, the spots soon disappeared, but on that day the dizziness was more overpowering than ever before.

July 17

I seem to have become used to the deep abyss of terror in which I live. Nothing terrifies me any longer. I am indifferent to the future. Most likely I shall die soon.

Yesterday I again saw on the wall a lean, crawling bedbug. But I did not tremble as I had done a few week ago. I calmly threw it off the wall and crushed it with my foot.

Our fate will be the same, I suppose. . . . Well, what of it? It does not matter.

July 21

I notice that I am overcome at times with a sudden hatred of strangers. And with me, whatever is in my heart is on my face. The hatred is noticed at once. It is strange to see a half-frightened, half-surprised expression appearing on the other's face. The person, startled, jerks his shoulders, looks at me in bewilderment, and passes by hastily.

What is happening to me?

July 23

Today, as I was leaving for work in the morning, mama said, affectionately:

"My poor child, you don't look like yourself any more."

I rushed to the mirror. A perfectly white face, without a drop of blood. But I am not very much thinner. Only, the cheek bones protrude slightly.

Then the face disappeared in the mist, and because of this I felt inexpressibly sorry for myself. Poor me, poor me, poor me! Lord, I shall surely die!

I walked to the tram station, weeping. I rode in the tram, and wept.

July 25

Of late, I frequently wake up in the middle of the night and cry. Sometimes I wake up with my eyes already full of tears.

At such moments all the trifling details of our terrible life come back to my memory for some reason. Life drags on, day after day. Papa, mama, Borya and I pass by, pale and thin. And I look upon them and upon myself as if from the outside. I compare how we were a month ago and how we are now. And a terror seizes me such as could never come in the daytime; convulsively I sink my teeth into the pillow and try to fall asleep. But sleep will not come. The room is dark. I hear papa sighing in his sleep, Borya moaning painfully, mama muttering. . . .

Then comes the dawn, and then the day. I must rise and go to work. I see, through half-lowered eyelashes, papa getting up. How terrible he looks in his nightclothes! A white shirt and a white face, wrinkled by sleep. The eyes are deep sunken and are absolutely without glitter . . . dead. He unbuttons the collar of his shirt, takes it off, and begins to hunt for lice. Lord, a real skeleton! Strangely white, round arms, thin, thin, without muscles. And to them seem to be attached dirty, dark palms, broad as shovels. They do not so much as look like hands. How thin he has

grown! If only I could close my eyes and not look!

But my eyes will not close. I stare as if chained, and am afraid to budge.

He went away. Now mama begins to walk with tired step through the quiet, sleepy rooms. She prepares hot water. What for? There is no bread. Are we really going to drink it—without a bite to eat?

Then the day drags on. Then comes the terrible evening. The evening is the most terrible thing of all. The room is quiet. Papa is lying down, mama is lying down, Borya and I are lying down. We are afraid to turn off the electricity. The glowing lamp shines under the ceiling. And I know that each one of us lies stretched out, looking upon this shining lamp, thinking of something—and slowly dying. At times, amidst the stillness and the electric light, there rises the feeble, timid sobbing of Borya. No one consoles him. No one has the strength to.

And when the current is shut off, it becomes even more terrible to lie in darkness. It is terrible, I know, that each of us is lying in his corner wide awake. Everyone is lying in his corner, and dying. And none of us concerns himself in the least about the others.

Then the hope comes that, at last, they have all fallen asleep. And suddenly papa's tortured voice breaks the stillness:

"Mother, perhaps there is something else we could sell?"

From the other corner mama's voice replies, but not at once. A minute passes, two minutes. The stillness and darkness in the room seem to grow tense, and at last, through the darkness, crawls mama's terrible whisper:

"What else is there? Shall we sell our heads, or what?"

Again a minute passes, two, three, and papa's hopeless and muffled sigh breaks the stillness:

"O Lord!"

Only during supper, over our miserable pottage, are we alive a little. Common worries and apprehensions are expressed. But soon there will not be even this pottage. Then . . . then we shall have to die. What difference does it make?

July 27

What does this mean?

Tonight papa came with a joyful face and, without removing his hat and coat, stopped in the middle of the room and took out a newspaper.

"Well, mother, rejoice!"

Mama asks in an exhausted voice:

"What is it?"

And I too, ask:

"What? What's the matter?"

"Rejoice! Permission has been issued for the free transit of products for the workers. You will go to the country, mother, and bring bread for us."

Bread, bread, bread! O Lord! We still have four *poods* of bread in the country. . . . But how can mama go? She has grown thinner than any of us, poor thing. She will never be able to reach the place. She will drop in the car. Let him go himself.

But mama joyfully crosses herself:

"Well, thank God!"

Papa reads aloud the order printed in the paper. We all listen greedily. Papa insists once more that mama is to go, and I look upon his glad face and think:

"Egoist, egoist, egoist! Here again he is an egoist! Mama is weaker than he is and she may drop in the car from exhaustion, and die."

July 29

Mama went away today in my absence, while I was at work. I did not expect it to happen so soon.

I came home as usual at six o'clock and I noticed at once: the rooms are in utter disorder. And, more than that, there are three pancakes on the table, and they seem to be unusually thick.

"Borya, what does it mean?"

"Mamochka has gone away. . . ."

His eyes blink and his lower lip trembles. He is about to cry. He is afraid to remain alone with papa.

All this is clearly written upon his starved little face. It is not in vain that he nestles so closely to me, as if he seeks in me protection against papa. Poor, poor boy! Poor orphan! I . . . I will not let you wrong him, you egoist.

And in the evening the egoist came and brought twenty pounds of potatoes. He spreads them on the floor and carefully divides them into ten equal heaps. His emaciated face is preoccupied.

Twice he counts over the potatoes in each heap, and then counts the total. He raises his eyes from the floor to me and says threateningly:

"Now, remember, these must last for ten days."

He sets one little stack aside. It is for tomorrow. He hides somewhere the remaining nine. My look is wary and spiteful. He pays no attention to it. Having counted the potatoes he says pleasantly:

"Well, now mama has left, we will live alone."

And suddenly he notices my spiteful look. The good nature in his voice and in his eyes dies out at once. A spasm of suffering passes over his yellowish-white face, crumpled like a rag. He rises slowly and walks out of the room. Borya follows him with frightened, piteous eyes. And he nestles to me, closer and

closer. I kiss him and cry, following papa with an evil, watchful look.

July 31

How strangely we live now. Papa—on his own, and we—on our own. Nothing binds us together. On the contrary, many things divide us. We are utter strangers. . . .

And my heart aches and grieves for mama. Mama has surely sunk down in the car—she is ill—they took her to the hospital. She is already dying.

Borya, too, is alarmed. Every hour, every minute, he watches the expression of my face. If I am calm —he is calm; if I cry—he cries. This morning he suddenly asked me:

"Oh, Feechka, and what if mama has died?"

And he looked at me with frightened eyes.

My heart shuddered at this question and at the look in his frightened eyes. With difficulty I mastered myself and answered calmly:

"Nonsense, she will probably come back soon."

And in the evening I myself broke down. All day long I thought of mama, and toward evening I suddenly burst into unrestrained sobbing. Boris came over to me, nestled close to me, and said unexpectedly:

"Feechka, don't cry. I know why you are crying. You think that mama is dead."

"No, no, Borya. I just feel sad. I'm hungry."

But he repeats persistently, in a low voice, nestling to me still closer:

"No, no, I know it! You think that mama is dead. Don't cry, I know what we're going to do. . . ."

I hold him close, kiss him, and ask him through my tears:

"What, Borenka, what?"

"We'll die, too! Feechka, you mustn't cry."

And really, this is a way out! How is it that I haven't thought of it before? If she should die, we will die, too. That is all!

I say to him joyously:

"That's right, that's right, Borenka—only, think up what way we are to die."

"I have already thought it out. We'll jump into the Neva. It's not far. But together."

"And how about papa?"

"Papa will probably keep on living."

Borya speaks in a serious tone. The tortured, childish eyes look businesslike. He . . . he has thought of everything long ago. What a boy! Not like me who does nothing but cry all the time.

And suddenly thoughts come to me about Serezha, Vanya, Shura. How about them? But Borya probably knows.

I ask him timidly:

"And Serezha, Vanya, Shura?"

And Borya answers with assurance. I can see that he has thought it over a thousand times.

"Well, it will be hard on them, but they are grown up and we are little. They can get along without us. Vanya will cry a bit, maybe. And Serezha will understand. He's clever."

How right he is in everything! Yes, yes, I shall write to Serezha and he will not be angry. He must not be angry. He will understand everything.

August 1

There develops in me more and more a sort of angry watchfulness over Borya. . . . I am in mortal fear that papa will starve him. But let him just try, then I . . . I will . . .

And at times there bursts forth my usual groundless irritation even against Borya. I shout at him and stamp my feet. And he does not answer back as he used to do in the old days. He only blinks his big, suffering eyes, and his little lower lip trembles.

And immediately burning remorse flares up. I kiss him and cry:

"Borenka, Borenka, forgive me, forgive . . ."

He nestles to me again and answers through tears:

"But I am not cross, Feechka; I know . . . you are hungry and mama is away."

As Borya gets no tea at present almost until nightfall, because he is left by himself in the house, papa gives him half a rouble every day. Borya goes to the nearest Soviet tea room and drinks tea. They also give him a piece of candy.

But tonight, when I came home from work, I at once noticed that there is something wrong with Borya. His face wears a particularly exhausted expression. Even his lips are parched.

I ask:

"What is the matter with you?"

And, of course, he begins to blink his eyes and says, with tears in his voice:

"I . . . I had no tea today."

Immediately the suspicious watchfulness against papa wakes up. Evil presentiments stir in my heart.

"Why?"

"Papa said that he wouldn't give me any more money. He said that I drink hardly any tea and spend the money just for candy. He said that this is a useless expense and that I may as well wait till everybody comes home. . . ."

I listen to his sobbing and can hardly believe my ears. This isn't hatred that flares up in me, but a

great, terrible rage. What horror, what horror! How dared he keep from the child the half rouble for tea! A monster, a real monster! I could tear him to pieces with my own hands! I could clutch at his neck, his eyes, his . . . all of him. . . .

"Borenka, Borenka, do not cry! I will speak to him. I will tell him. This is the devil of a trick to play! I won't let him, I won't let him!"

I ran up and down the room for almost two hours, waiting for him. And everything boiling, boiling within me. I wish he would come!

The bell rings.

He has not even had time to take off his things, but I already shout straight in his face with all my inexpressible rage:

"You . . . why did you not leave him money for tea?"

A tremor ran through him. Something terrible, terrible, flitted across his face. Then he mastered himself. With a gloomy face he squinted frowningly over his glasses.

"Because it is unnecessary. He doesn't drink the tea, anyway. All he wants is candy. . . . He won't die; he may as well wait until we come."

"I . . . I wonder at you. . . . Aren't you ashamed, ashamed, ashamed? . . . You would be glad if we all died right off! . . . Yes, yes, yes!"

Papa is stupefied. He fixes his terrible, motionless eyes on me, his gray, bloodless lips twitch, and the wrinkles above the bridge of his nose move painfully. Then he suddenly bangs his fist on the table:

"How dare you talk to me like this? How dare you! Keep quiet!"

For a second I am stunned, but I am not frightened. I gathered myself in a lump as if ready to

jump at him. And suddenly I trembled again with a new outburst of mad rage. I shout like one possessed, even louder than he:

"Yes, yes, I dare speak like that! I can say what I please if you act like that! You don't like the truth, do you?"

And his fit of anger died out. Again he looks at me in bewilderment mingled with fright.

"Yes, yes, you don't like it. . . . No wonder Boris and I had a presentiment that without mama you . . . you would lead us a terrible life!"

"O Lord!"

I stood petrified, with my mouth still open. What, what have I said to him? Is he a wild beast to his children? Is he, is he? How cruel I am. . . .

I can see that papa's pale face has become distorted, and his chin twitches convulsively. He did not say another word.

But the next day he left for Borya that miserable half rouble.

August 2

Another strange thing.

When Alexander used to come to us while mama was here, and mama would make him sit down to supper, I counted, in anger, every spoonful of pottage he ate. And papa was on my side. I knew that.

And now?

Now he still comes. How terrible his face is through hunger. He must be even nearer starvation than we. Timidly, fearfully, his eyes roam toward the corners of the room. He surely thinks that, mama being away, none of us will ask him in for supper.

He came today. I put all my soul into my hearty

greeting to him. I surprised him, and almost burst out crying myself. But papa ejaculated sulkily:

"Hello!"

Alexander glanced at him piteously, imploringly, and with stooping shoulders walked out to another room. He knows that without mama it is useless to expect that he will be asked to eat with us.

But I set the table and shout:

"Shura, come to supper!"

I called him and stood on the alert. What is *he* going to say? Let him! . . . Alexander will eat with us, whatever happens.

And papa raises his surprised, alarmed eyes, and whispers malevolently:

"What's the matter with you? Are you mad?"

I meet his gaze firmly, and without turning my eyes away keep calling still more persistently:

"Shura, come to supper!"

For almost a full minute our eyes are riveted to each other's. And my heart is filled with triumph. Now, take that, you egoist! You are not going to starve your own son. He is miserable as it is. Poor Alexander!

At last papa lowers his eyes. He does not glance once at Alexander when he comes in to supper.

August 3

Alexander came again today.

I met him as heartily as yesterday. He feels it. He sat down to supper with greater assurance. He ate, and immediately after made ready to go. But I notice that, for some reason or other, he is lingering in the kitchen.

Papa is lying down in the bedroom, as usual. Borya and I sit on the couch, nestling close to each other.

And suddenly my heart quakes with an inexplicable, terrible foreboding. At once the old watchfulness awakens. Only, I cannot understand toward what it is directed. . . . Lord, what—what is going to happen? I am all atremble. I look within myself. Ah, it is Alexander, Alexander! . . . He is doing something in the kitchen. He wants to take something from us! To take, to take! And not a sound comes from the kitchen.

Convulsively I push aside the frightened Boris, and with sinking heart dash to the kitchen.

I rush in. He stands at the table and stares at me strangely.

I jump toward him with a mad, piercing cry:

"What are you doing here? What? What? What?"

And he is embarrassed. Lord, then it is true, it is true! But what, what can he take from us? What is he taking away from us?

And suddenly I remember that under the table there are two pounds of potatoes, all ready for tomorrow. I rush to the table—the potatoes are gone.

He has stolen them.

I leap at him like a wild beast.

"Give them back; give back our potatoes; give them back, you miserable wretch!"

And he seems to have turned to stone, with his white, bloodless face. A terrible strain knits his brows closer and closer. Vaguely, I notice that the little finger of his left hand trembles spasmodically. His lips move in an effort to say something. At last he mumbles:

"I . . . I did not take your potatoes."

But I have a strong, terrible, cruel assurance that he has taken them. I howl senselessly, like a beast:

"Give'm back, give'm back, give . . ."

His face becomes more and more terribly distorted. The convulsive strain struggles with his stubbornness. Now the stubbornness has the upper hand. My heart sinks. I keep on howling more and more senselessly:

"Give'm back, give'm back, give . . ."

And suddenly a new outburst of rage. Ah! He . . . has stolen from the starving! He, he . . .

Like an enraged cat I jumped at him and fastened on his hard, bony shoulders so that my fingers hurt.

"Papa, papa, come here, why don't you! Alexander has stolen our potatoes. Quick, quick! He'll get away. You miserable thief, give back our potatoes, give them back!"

Papa ran in, clad in his underwear—thin, emaciated, terrible, with distorted face.

I hold Alexander by the shoulders and shout to papa:

"Papa, papa, he has stolen our potatoes! Take 'em away from him! He won't give 'em back!"

Papa's white figure becomes twisted. He shakes his bare, round, thin arms with the huge fists at the ends. Even the dirty toes on his bare feet have become twisted, and seem to have sunk into the floor.

"Scoundrel, give back those potatoes at once!"

And I scream even louder than he:

"Papa, papa, I'm holding him! Search him, quick! Quick! Quick!"

Alexander looks about him like a cornered beast and meets a beast-like hatred. The tense stubbornness in his face breaks. His face becomes pitiful. Suddenly he begins to take the potatoes, one by one, from his pockets, and whispers, almost inaudibly, with trembling lips:

"Take them—here, here . . ."

He turns, and walks out, slowly, cowering.

Papa did not even bother to cast a glance at him. Bending greedily, thin, long, all in white, he counts the potatoes. Then he carefully hides them, and, as he walks, throws at me:

"You dolt, he'll swipe everything this way!"

And I remained horror-stricken in the middle of the kitchen. What have I done? Is he not hungry? He is hungrier than we are. I should have let him have them. . . . Let him have them? And what would we eat tomorrow? And Boris?

I stand as if in a trance, and bitter, anguished thoughts flash through my brain. Suddenly everything becomes effaced in a flood of impotent tears.

Oh, what a wretch I am, what a wretch! . . .

August 4

Today we have the first letter from mama.

Thank God! And all those days my heart ached with the fear: why does she not write? Perhaps she is dead. . . . Can there be such heartless people that they have not even notified us?

And clearly, as in a cinema, I picture mama dead. I ride in the tram and before my eyes I see my dead mama with motionless, white, cold face. I walk along the street—the same thing. And I can feel the tears rolling down my cheeks. I realize vaguely that passersby stop, noticing them.

And at the office Maruska looks into my eyes and asks me sympathetically:

"Not yet?"

"No."

Today the letter came. Mama writes that she arrived safely and that she has already sent us some bread in a parcel, together with the letter. She hopes

to be able to bring some biscuits, some groats, and about two *poods* of flour. She is leaving soon.

Borya and I and even papa read the letter again and again—twenty times.

In the evening we ate our miserable pottage. Suddenly my spoon stopped midway in the air. I looked at the pottage with a strange, joyous feeling:

"Soon there will be no more of you!"

And papa looked at me and smiled.

Borya, too, began to smile happily.

August 6

Now that mama's letter has come I feel reassured about her. I believe that nothing will happen to her, that she will come back soon.

In expectation of the parcel I sat at the office yesterday, buoyant and cheerful, and suddenly a terrible thought crossed my mind:

"Lord, and Borya stays at home all, all alone! He . . . he may drown himself. He wanted to do it! Or he might go mad. . . . Yes, yes, something will surely happen to him today!"

My heart began to ache with these terrible forebodings. I could not work. I sat there, a mist floating before my eyes. And through the mist I see clearly my pale, thin Borya. He runs to the Neva. He is there. He stands a minute and thinks. He blinks in a piteous, piteous way, and suddenly—splash! with his head down.

I could not stand it and I begged them at the office to let me go home early. I sped home as if on wings. When I rang the bell I almost burst out crying when I heard behind the door his weak little voice. But I checked myself and asked him as if indifferently:

"Well, how are you?"

"All right, Feechka, mama will come soon, I guess."

And today again, as I was getting ready to go to work, my heart began to ache terribly. No, I cannot go. Something will surely happen to him. I will not go.

I stayed at home. The whole time I did not let him take a step out of my sight. At noon I myself saw him off to the children's dining room, and after dinner I gave him the kettle and saw him to the gate.

I said to him, like mother:

"Well, Borenka, go. God bless you!"

I made the cross over him and remained standing at the gate looking after him.

He swings the little kettle feebly in his hand, and walks slowly along the fence. And side by side with him a thin shadow walks slowly along the fence. And suddenly I clutched convulsively at the gate.

How thin and pale he is! I have only now noticed it. Terrible, terrible, and how my heart aches! He walks, and his little head sways on his thin neck. And one little shoulder, thin and sharp, is higher than the other. His little feet are just like thin sticks. Ah, what a poor, unhappy child! He is melting, he is melting away before my eyes. He will not even have the strength to reach the dining room. There, how thin his shadow is! He will drop down somewhere. He will die in the street.

I shiver as in a fever, awaiting his return.

I wait, and wait, and wait.

Why is he so long? Surely he has fallen; he fell . . . he died. I will run to look for him. . . .

But the little figure appears in the distance. I rush to meet him. I kiss him, embrace him, and weep.

"Borenka, Borenka, why were you so long? What happened to you?"

He raises his prematurely old, wrinkled, little face. He says in alarm:

"Nothing, Fea; I didn't take long. I always come like this. . . ."

"No, no; you took a long time. . . . What is the matter with you? . . ."

I did not finish because Borya looks strangely at me, with tears in his eyes:

"Feechka, I love you very much. Don't . . . don't be afraid; I won't jump into the Neva now. Mama is coming soon."

Before papa's coming I began to cook the potatoes. As usual, following mama's example, I stole one potato out of each two pounds. We do this every day. We cut it raw into thin slices and bake it right on the stove, hastily, so that papa should not surprise us, and we always share it equally.

And today I give him the whole potato:

"Here, Borenka, eat."

And again he gazes with the same look. Even the same tears in his lowered eyes. He says almost in a whisper:

"No, Feechka, I won't eat without you."

August 7

Today the parcel came at last.

Mama sent it to my name to the Post Office. I received it while at work and brought it to the office.

Immediately they all surrounded me:

"Feika, Feika, what's in it?"

"Dumplings, I bet."

"No, it's butter."

"Come on, Feika, open it!"

And greed suddenly awakens in me. Oh, I know. If I open it I will have to treat everybody. There

will be but little left for ourselves. I was never like this before. When mama came from the country I treated Lelka to some of the biscuits—I even offered it to her myself. And now I have grown greedy.

I say carelessly:

"The idea! Dumplings and butter, indeed! Plain bread, and nothing else."

I begged off from work and hastened home.

No sooner had I entered the yard than I shouted though the open window:

"Bor, Bor, come to meet me! The package!"

In feverish haste I pulled off my hat and coat, and Borya, with the color mounting at once in his cheeks, cuts the canvas open and stammers tremblingly:

"Oh, Fea, Fea, how I want it, quick!"

There are three little loaves of bread in the parcel. One is quite small, another a little bigger, and the third bigger still. I look roguishly at Boris and say:

"Mama did it on purpose. The biggest one—for papa, the smaller for me, and the smallest—for you."

And he replies, even more roguishly:

"No, Fea, they just happened to be baked that way."

We cut the smallest loaf into three equal parts and ate our share. Papa's share remains and I look at it and it seems to be looking at me.

I glance sidewise at Borya, and he is already prepared and catches my glance at once. He is embarrassed, and so am I.

I say to him indecisively:

"Well, let's."

But at the same time my eyes say:

"No, no! It isn't right."

He understands, of course, my silent entreaty, but hunger is so strong, and then . . . well, papa has an extra half pound.

"I don't know. As you like . . . let's . . ."

But I have already mastered myself. I answer loudly and cheerfully:

"It won't do. He'll be angry. And then . . . he's hungry too."

August 8

There is not a bit left for today from yesterday's parcel. But today we have had good luck again.

No bread has been given out on the cards almost since the middle of July. No, no, and no. And today papa received it all—for the entire time.

He enters with a big bag on his shoulders, beaming:

"Rejoice, rejoice, children; I bring bread for all the back days. Oh, it's even tired me dragging it."

Borya and I shout together:

"How much, how much?"

"Eighteen pounds for all of us."

"And for us, how much for us?"

"Eight for you and ten for me."

Lucky man—ten pounds for him alone and eight for the two of us, and then his extra half pound. . . .

But I quickly prepare dinner. I sit down and smile. A knife is in my hands, and before me on the table a whole huge loaf of bread. And papa, too, holds a knife. Before him lies a huge loaf, and he smiles at it. I glanced at Boris, and he joins in our smiles and rubs his hands and mutters:

"Now we are going to eat bread; now, now. . . ."

And suddenly I notice that papa's loaf looks somewhat too small for ten pounds. I cut my bread with delight and say to papa:

"Papochka, your loaf looks rather small. There are no ten pounds there."

And he says with a smile, just like Borya s:

"Well, fool that I am, when I got the bread, I tried

and tried to resist, and then ate nearly two pounds of it at the factory."

And Borya, too, breaks out, with a squeal:

"Oh, and we're going to eat now, to eat, to eat!"

Papa cut such a thick piece for himself that I was lost in admiration. It made me feel happy when I remembered what thin slices he used to cut off. Lord, if it could always be like this! Papa would not be an egoist then. How nice it would be!

And he chews his piece with his toothless gums and says, with a kindly smile:

"Look here, kids. . . ."

We both interrupt him:

"What, what is it, papochka?"

"Well, don't be sparing today, eat as much as you like. But from tomorrow on begin to ration it out. A piece in the morning and a piece at night. Just as I do."

"Mm-yes, mm-yes, mm-yes. . . ."

With our miserable pottage we ate about two pounds of bread each. After dinner, to mark the festive occasion, papa sends to the tea-room. Contrary to his usual order, we must bring two portions of tea each and two bonbons apiece. There is a lot of bread and we may drink a lot of tea.

At tea I measured with my eyes papa's piece and mine. Ours is already quite small. I caress it with my eyes, and I am still so hungry.

I say to Boris with an air of assurance:

"Well, you don't want any more, do you? I think we'd better leave it for tomorrow. Shan't we, Borya?"

But Borya says:

"No, Feechka, only a little, little bit more for each of us. We'll make a nice mush in a glass. Mush doesn't take so much bread. Oh, come on, Fea!"

And there was nothing Fea wanted more eagerly.

"Well, all right, what am I to do with you? Come on, come on. . . ."

I cut the bread. There, there,—I wanted to cut off a small piece for each of us, and instead they are great, thick slices! And three pounds or so is all that remains to us. What a pity!

Regretfully I turn our piece over in my hand, but to Borya I say carelessly:

"Well, for once, let's eat. It's no use crying over it. Isn't that so Boris?"

"Mm-yes, mm-yes, Fea, that's right. . . ."

Papa carefully wraps his bread in paper. He rises and says:

"Thank God, today I'm quite full."

And after him we too rise. I point to my stomach and say to Boris, with a smile covering my whole face:

"Bor, aren't you full in here? You've had enough?"

"Oh, yes, Feechka, I've had enough . . . And you know, the bottom crust is so nice. Look how brown it is."

"Oh, you rascal! Well, all right, let's eat the bottom crust; but now let's put the rest away or we'll eat up all of it."

"Yes, yes, Feechka, we must put it away."

Papa has grown quite heavy. Without undressing, without even taking off his boots, he lies down on the bed, smokes his pipe, and reads the paper. Now and then he glances at us over his spectacles and smiles kindly. Boris and I have crawled into a corner. We chatter ceaselessly about mama, and laugh with the joy of satiation. In half an hour, or an hour, I suddenly feel again that I am hungry, terribly hungry. Shall I tell Boris about it? It would be wrong. Papa will give me a lecture tomorrow. "There," he will

say, "you're a big girl and you couldn't restrain yourself. If Borya had done it, I could excuse it."

I decided that I would say nothing to Boris and that I would not eat the bread; I would only go and look at the piece in the cupboard.

I get up. I pretend to yawn, and then I go out. And Boris, at once:

"Where are you going?"

"Stay here, I'll be back in a minute."

He looks archly at me, smiles, and says:

"Ah, so that's how you are! I'll go with you."

"Oh, you little wretch! There's no getting around him. Very well, then, come on. A little bit more apiece."

I cut it off and say:

"Bor, Bor, what fools we are! We're going to eat up all the bread."

"Oh, no, Feechka, I think that we're very smart."

And he looks at me still more mischievously.

"Ah, you little puppy! Quick, come to sleep; otherwise we'll eat up everything."

"Come, Feechka!"

Borka put his bread between his teeth and, strangely, feverishly, began to hurry. He undresses but does not remove the bread from his mouth. I ask him in astonishment:

"Why are you hurrying so?"

"You know, Feiushenka, I'll lie down in bed and eat the bread. It feels so good that way, doesn't it? You lie there and eat and it goes down by itself right into your throat."

We both crawled under the blanket. We lie there and whisper. We nibble the bread slowly. And suddenly I notice that Boris is asleep and in his hand a little bit of the bread.

I swallowed that morsel too. I was already falling asleep when I heard papa stirring and groaning in another corner. I opened my drowsy eyes and saw papa, clad in his nightclothes, noiselessly creeping somewhere. . . . Heavens, where is he going? I was frightened.

And suddenly I see through the open door of the dining room that he is making direct for the cupboard. His bare feet patter on the floor. Aha! The door of the cupboard creaks. Ah, a falling knife rings through the stillness.

And after the ringing, I hear the words:

"Ah, devil take it! What a fool I am."

Reassured, I dived under the blanket and laughed without any malice. Aha, you, too, couldn't resist! And yet you lectured us. . . . Oh, daddy, daddy!

And for the first time in all those months I had dreams. And in the morning I could even recollect them quite clearly.

August 11

Mama came today. She brought about two *poods* of flour, twenty pounds of groats, and fifteen pounds of biscuits.

With her mouth half open she sits on a chair and holds her hands in a strange, weary way. The open bags are spread at her feet. A yellowish-brown, coarse flour is seen. And then the groats. All of us: papa, Borya, and I—stand and look at them in silence. We gaze at the flour and the groats, and not a sound passes our lips. And suddenly Borya burst into low sobs.

And in the evening we made pancakes, cooked some *kasha,* which we had not tasted for half a year, and stuffed ourselves to repletion.

August 14

It is only three days since we have been having enough to eat, but we look altogether different. We are still thin and pale, but we are full of life. Like a goat, Borka jumps about on his little legs that are as thin as laths, and every minute he asks for a "little pancake". Mama always gives it to him, but I notice that she prefers to do it in papa's absence.

The hateful pottage has disappeared from the table, but we have very little conversation at the table. Instead, papa prefers to read the newspaper aloud.

I have developed a habit of looking into the mirror every day. I am waiting impatiently for the color to return to my cheeks. With the same passionate impatience I watch mama, Borya, and papa: when will they pick up? Three days have passed and Borya is noticeably fresher; mama too, but there is absolutely no change in papa. It is terrible to look at his lean, shriveled figure, his terrible face, and his long, thin arms.

And then those bags with the supplies. They were put in the dining room, in a corner. I cannot pass them without glancing back apprehensively.

August 15

Tonight, at supper, papa surprised even us hungry ones. He ate at one time about four pounds of bread and I could see by his eyes that he could have eaten more.

August 16

I came to the office buoyant, lively, as I used to be when living in the country. And right off I started to talk:

"Lelka, say, Lelka! We're going to have cabbage-

dumplings today; and do you know how to make tarts?"

"Well, not tarts, but I can bake such cake as would make you lick your fingers. I don't like cabbage-dumplings."

"Oh, I'm fond of them, and I'm very fond of cabbage-and-meat rolls."

I keep chattering about tarts and cabbage-and-meat rolls, but not so long ago I had not wished to hear such conversations. I used to get angry and say that it was gluttonous talk, and that only animals could indulge in it.

August 17

For the first time this summer I went to the cinema. I came home late, about eleven. I enter, and am astonished. Alexander is seated at the table, devouring a great mound of pancakes. He is wearing an ill-fitting Red Army coat. But even before I had caught a glimpse of his coat, my heart was painfully stricken by the sight of his terrible, unbelievably thin legs, in their brown puttees. His feet are encased in huge army shoes.

He has not been to see us once since the incident of the potatoes. And now he looked up at me in fear, and said hastily, in a tearful voice:

"I've been conscripted. They send me to the front day after tomorrow. Perhaps we'll never see each other again."

And he brushed off his tears with the enormous, gray sleeve of his coat. I was overcome by a feeling of unpleasant surprise. Why is he crying? Coward, coward!

There had just awakened in my heart pity for him, grief and remorse for the potatoes, but this gesture

of his seemed to sweep everything away. I say to him almost angrily:

"Well, if it's to be the front, to the front you must go. Serezha and Vanya went as volunteers. So why do you pull a long face?"

And he answers in such a tearful voice:

"Well, it's all right for you to talk, here at home. . . ."

Lord, he begins to blink like Boris. Even his lower lip trembles in the same way. Ha! Ha! What a defender! You can't get far with such as he is. I hate to see a man crying. And suppose he has to take part in an attack? How will he be then? And he a workingman! He is afraid to defend his own government! I shout at him, almost enraged:

"Aren't you ashamed, aren't you ashamed?"

And only half an hour later, when he was about to leave, I felt another access of pity for him. But even this pity is contemptuous. I could not force myself to kiss him heartily. I only said to him, as a farewell:

"Well, go, and God bless you; don't cry, and remember—write. . . ."

August 19

Why is papa so thin and exhausted? He eats a lot, more than any of us, and still he remains just as terrible a sight as before. I am afraid to think about it, but every night his frail leanness strikes my eye and I cannot help thinking about it. It will probably not last, however, even with him.

And I am truly coming back to life. I have the desire to go to the theater, the cinema. Once or twice I visited Maruska.

August 27

There was but one letter from Alexander, from Smolensk, and no tidings whatsoever since then. He

wrote that he was soon to be sent to the Polish front.

And I know that if he were alive and well he would surely write.

August 28

Why is it that there is still no change in papa? He is just as thin, shrunken, yellow. We have all changed long ago, we have grown more fresh and cheerful, but he remains just as gloomy and morose. Sometimes, for a whole evening, he will not enter once into our conversation. He stations himself at the stove, folds his hands behind his back, and stares upward into space.

August 29

The parcel about which Vanya wrote in the middle of the summer was received only today. It turned out to contain about twelve pounds of bricks and about eight pounds of groats well mixed with sand.

It is a good thing that this parcel did not come in those terrible days. It would have driven us mad!

September 1

O Lord, O Lord, soon the supplies will be exhausted! Will we have to come back to the same life again? Again the pottage? But now we have nothing to sell!

And how strange: the gloomier the atmosphere at home, the more noisily and gayly do I carry on at the office.

I often visit Maruska, so as to evade those nights at home.

Another worry: it is already three weeks since we had a letter from Serezha, and he used to write punctually, every week.

I am afraid to keep thinking of these things. I sacrifice my pride, and consent to go with Maruska to the cinema or to the theater. And there was a time when it went against the grain for me to go at someone else's expense.

September 2

The bread ration has been increased. Again mama and I get half a pound for two days, Borya five-eighths for two days, papa three-quarters of a pound on his citizen's card and . . . the same miserable half pound extra. I remembered this half pound, and shivers ran through me.

September 5

What a horror, what a horror!

I had not seen Nikolai Pavlovich at the Post Office for a long time, but somehow I paid no attention to this. And yesterday someone suddenly said:

"Don't you know? He died last July. Paralysis of the heart. They say it was from emaciation."

I was thunderstruck. I stood stock-still, unable to grasp it. I gaze at the one who has just spoken and do not see his face. And suddenly his face became clear, and I understood everything, everything. A mad, almost animal fear clutches at my heart. . . . And we, and we? Are we, too, going to die? Just wait till the supplies run out. There is but little flour left, and the groats are quite gone.

Then I was ashamed; I asked:

"How did it happen? Why? Why?"

"It's very simple. A complete loss of strength. The man had nothing to eat. They say his father is dying too."

"The man had nothing to eat?" How simple! Yes,

yes, it's very simple. And I thought that I was starving . . . Oh, yes! That time at the Post Office, when he did not eat his herring, it was probably because he had to share it with his father. Dear, good Nikolai Pavlovich!

And suddenly I blushed. It came to my mind that there was nobody now to urge me to study. And it was so pleasant to think of it. . . . Horror, horror! What a wretch I am! . . .

Suddenly my tears burst forth. But, God, I feel again that these are tears of fear for myself, for mama, for Boris, rather than tears for Nikolai Pavlovich. We . . . we too will probably die of hunger. . . .

I came home, depressed. At supper I swallow my tears and cannot tell them that Nikolai Pavlovich is dead. It seems to me that they will burst into tears as I did. And besides, as it is they seem terribly downcast about something. Mama says in a low voice:

"There is just flour enough for tomorrow, and not a thing more."

And these words gave me a jolt. No sooner had mama spoken than I said in the same low tone:

"Nikolai Pavlovich died of starvation."

They all lowered their eyes to the table and were silent. Then Borya began to cry noiselessly, mama crossed herself, and the wrinkles on papa's forehead began to move in a terrible way.

Tomorrow pottage again, provided there still remains something to sell.

September 7

Today I went to work hungry, and in the evening there was pottage.

There are still no letters from Serezha and Alexander.

September 10

Hunger, hunger, and hunger. We all seem to have grown slack and listless.

September 15

There is almost nothing to sell. Yesterday there was again a long and painful conference. They decided to cook porridge every other day only.

And bread is being given out again at long intervals. Once in five or six days. Papa gets an extra half pound.

September 20

My head is whirling. In the mornings, red, green, and blue spots float before my eyes. Faces show double in the streets. Everything, everything just as it used to be. At night—dead silence in the house. Last night I woke up and heard something. For a long time I tried to understand what it was. At last I understood; it was mama weeping. But I did not speak to her and merely turned my face to the wall.

But papa is more terrible than the rest of us. He is literally drying up and shriveling. He comes from work looking awful, awful. He moans and groans, and complains that his feet swell and hurt. But no one responds;—not a sound. He . . . he gets half a pound extra.

Before going to bed, he places himself with his back to the cold stove and folds his hands behind him. He stands there for two or three hours. His dead immobility and his vacant eyes strike terror into the heart. He stares somewhere into space, and even his eyelashes do not stir.

And then he goes to his lonely bed.

September 25

Either Autumn is approaching or everything seems to have faded from hunger. Even the tram cars; not long ago they were so brilliantly red, and now, as I enter the tram, I see that they are dull, dull.

There are no thoughts. Only, somewhere in the very depths, there stirs and agitates the worry that no letters have come as yet from Serezha and Shura.

October 1

For the last two weeks almost, at our office and at the Post Office generally, everybody seems to be peculiarly excited and joyfully awaiting something. They assemble in groups, whisper in the corners, speak in an undertone while at work. It is disgusting to watch all this. I sit silently and show not the least interest in their whispering and in the reasons for their rejoicing.

And today our treasurer, Tiurin, suddenly asked me:

"And you, Fea Alexandrovna, don't you want the Whites to come?"

"The Whites to come? Where?"

'Why, don't you know that it will soon be all over with Petrograd? . . . Yudenich is advancing. . . ."

Aha! So this is why they have all been whispering and exchanging secrets? And I remembered at once that I had already heard long ago vague rumors that the Whites are advancing. But I thought that it was not on Petrograd, but somewhere far away.

Papa said nothing at home. For a long time, from the day when the last handful of flour was eaten, he has not read the paper to us in the evenings, and does not talk to us about anything. The Whites are advancing. . . . No, no, they shall not take our Petrograd!

I say to Tiurin:

"Nonsense, they advanced twenty times, and could not take it, and they won't be able to take it now."

That evening I asked papa:

"Is it true that the Whites are advancing on Petrograd?"

Mama raised frightened eyes to me, then shifted them to papa. Papa kept silent for a while, then he said unwillingly:

"It's Yudenich. He advanced more than once before this, but always retreated again."

October 2

I am somewhat late this morning. I come to the office and find everybody already there, but no one is working. They stand in a crowd and no longer whisper but speak openly. All eyes are bright and all faces are joyful. And I became so angry as I looked at those eyes and faces. Without greeting any of them, I sat down to work. I am the only one at work in the whole office, and I listen with one ear to what they are saying.

And they say in the crowd that soon there will be no bread at all—everything will be sent to the front; that the Red Army soldiers are all hungry and very young, and that, therefore, Petrograd will be taken. And when the Whites will come, bread will again be sold at three kopeks a pound, there will be enough of everything, and there will be an end of the communists.

I listen, and suddenly a great fear crawls into my heart. Heavens, Serezha and Vanya are communists! How will things turn out? How? And there will be no bread. We shall all die of hunger. No, no, they will not take the city!

Suddenly I jump up and run toward the crowd:

"Why are you so happy? They won't take it anyhow; they won't, they won't!"

They all grew silent, then exchanged glances, and then burst out laughing.

"Ha-ha-ha! So our Fea Alexandrovna is a bolshevik? . . . No, no, Fea Alexandrovna, this time will settle the matter all right."

"Nothing of the sort; they'll never take it!"

I ran away from them and again sat down to work.

And the pen just keeps shaking in my hand. And all the time blots, blots, blots. I make them on purpose.

At night, different from his usual way, papa brought the paper and began to read it aloud. We listened with a tense, weird interest. Especially mama. And though she could grasp nothing in the telegrams from the front, she keeps thinking about Serezha and Vanya. And Shura.

October 7

Toward noon the newspapers are brought to the Post Office. We rush from every corner of the room to the messenger boy, so as to get them first. But it is I who usually get hold of them, because my seat is nearest the door. I read feverishly at first, in silence, and then aloud. God, the Whites are still advancing. It says they are quite near by now.

And they all call me a bolshevik. Nobody knows what is going on within me. I cannot understand myself: do I or do I not want the Whites to come? They say that there will be plenty of bread. We will all have enough to eat. But Serezha, Vanya! They are communists. God, what is to happen? Will the Whites really come? . . .

And it seems that the same thing is taking place in

mama's soul. Today papa was reading the paper and she suddenly broke out in a terrible scream:

"Ah, the devil take it, let them come! It doesn't matter now. Let there be an end of any sort, so long as it's over!"

What a terrible scream! It comes from the very heart. I wanted to look at mama's face and I could not. I know, I know. . . . She had been thinking for a long time about Serezha and about Vanya, and that everything is sold and that starvation is ahead. All, all this sounded in her scream. It sounded and died out. Now it is all the same to her.

But it is not all the same to me, yet. I feel it, but I do not know what to decide.

October 10

Will they really take it? They are coming nearer and nearer.

Papa came home today particularly upset. Without allowing himself time to take his coat off, he says:

"They are very close. There may be an engagement."

He paused for half a minute and added:

"Now, listen, mother. They say that whole families of Red Army soldiers are being shot down because the sons are at the front. You'd better gather all the letters from Serezha, Vanya, and Shura, and burn them."

I interrupt him in the middle of the sentence and shout, with fierce indignation:

"That will be silly, that will be silly! They will find out anyhow, if they wish."

I have a desire to cry out that he is a coward, coward, coward! He is afraid of a letter from his own sons. This is what he has come to! And now, when

even I have nothing to live for, he fears for his life. Coward, coward! And he answers me, alarmed:

"What's this you're jabbering? How will they find out?"

"It's easy. They'll just find out. Yes, yes, yes, they'll find out! I'll tell them myself that I am a sister of brother-communists."

I snap my fingers at the Whites! Let them shoot me!

And suddenly papa shouted, enraged:

"Stop wagging your tongue, you chatterbox! If I say they must be burned, they must!"

The letters, nevertheless, were not burned. It was decided to wait till the last moment.

October 11

Telegrams are displayed at street corners: "Volosovo is in the hands of the enemy." And at the Post Office every face is beaming.

Our office became the club-room for the whole department. They gather early in the morning and joyfully discuss the news from the front. They ask me:

"Well, Fea Alexandrovna, Volosovo is taken. Still ready to argue?"

Tiurin asks this. He spreads his legs apart, puts his arms akimbo, and awaits the answer.

I looked into his laughing eyes, and a convulsive, angry tension rolled in a lump to my throat. I jumped up and had a desire to scream at the top of my voice, but the scream seemed to die out by itself. I sank again into my chair and said in a low voice:

"It's all the same to me now."

Tiurin spread his hands mockingly.

"Well, well, well! 'All the same.' And who was it that not long ago, stamping her little foot, said: 'They

won't come, they won't, they won't!' Well, well, Fea Alexandrovna; indeed, you are firm in your convictions!"

But I only repeated:

"It's all the same to me."

He laughed and went over to the gibbering crowd.

October 12

One can already hear the shooting. Near, near.

October 13

The shooting seems to be nearer still. Bread has not been given out for a long time. Lord, and Serezha? And Vanya?

October 14

All night I could not close my eyes.

I lay awake, listening. It is quite near, booming and booming. The house trembles and the windows rattle with a feeble, tinkling sound. I wish they'd hit our house! Let them—let them kill us all. Let a huge projectile crash in right here, under my bed. The room will at once burst into flame. Everything will split and fall to pieces. I feel slightly sorry for papa, mama, and Borya. But I—I will put my head right under one of the falling rafters.

October 15

Nevertheless, in the morning I went to work. The walls of houses are plastered with new telegrams: "The enemy's advance is stubborn." People stand, craning their necks toward the black letters and reading them greedily. Some smile with malicious joy, others have worried and alarmed faces.

At the office I was met with bows:

"Rejoice, Fea Alexandrovna. At last. Just a few hours now."

Before closing time the messenger boy rushes in and yells joyfully:

"The drawbridges are raised! The bridges are raised!"

And at once a joyful howling comes from all sides:

"Aha, aha! That means soon!"

"They got scared, the devils!"

"They're dancing now . . . Let's see. . . ."

"We'll soon eat white bread!"

Then they began to shout something else. I could no longer understand. During my long walk home I listened to the shots. I look at the sky; it is vast and all covered with clouds, but no projectiles can be seen. Only a drizzle of rain; it seems that my feet are wet. At home mama meets me. She is frightened:

"Well, thank God you've come. We worried, thinking you might have been killed."

I still had strength enough to answer her:

"What nonsense. I won't get killed."

And I even laughed derisively.

The night dragged slowly on, and toward morning it became quieter, for some reason. The quiet was still more terrible.

October 16

In the morning mama would not for a long time let me go to work.

"Don't go. Perhaps the White cavalry are already at the First Line. See, even papa is remaining at home."

But I went. It seems strange in the streets without the sounds of shooting. And there are no telegrams. The trams are not running. People walk in the streets and say that the situation is indefinite.

At the office they meet me with eager questions:

"Fea Alexandrovna, isn't there any news? Aren't the newspapers posted?"

They talk little today, and do not rejoice. They wait for the papers and are strangely silent. Lelka and Valka even start working.

And no sign of the papers. It is already after one. Why is this? Can it be, can it be?

Not until two o'clock does the boy rush in with the newspapers. I make a dash for him and grab it first.

They all crowd around me at once, and ask me to hurry. And the paper trembles in my hands . . . Lord, what is this? "The Whites are retreating along the entire front. Our offensive develops successfully."

"Come on, read, read!"

My head whirls. Glistening eyes, alarmed faces seem to flare up and fade before me. I shout to them with all my might:

"The Whites are in retreat everywhere! Our boys are driving them! Read it yourselves!"

I fell on the table and closed my eyes. How everything is spinning around! Voices come as if through a haze. Tiurin is speaking:

"And what are they fighting for, the hungry fools? I wish they'd send me—I'd show them how to fight the Whites!"

My breath came back to me. I opened my eyes. Somebody is talking to me but I understand nothing of what is being said. Suddenly my teeth begin to chatter as if in a fever. I open my eyes again. Red, green spots. I rub my forehead to drive them away, and my forehead is covered with sweat. This frightens me so! I said not a word to any of them and went home.

It seems that I walked on and on until evening set in.

I remember that my legs were shaking and that I clutched at the walls of the houses. And there was no shooting.

Then, strangely, I found myself at home. Mama was saying something and taking off my overcoat. Then she helped me to bed.

November 15

I have been ill for a whole month. I am still sick.

That evening mama helped me to bed, and I remember nothing else distinctly. . . .

. . . . . .

My eyes would open suddenly in the middle of the night. It felt as if I did not open them myself, but as if somebody tore them open from within. This is not night any longer—it is vast, eternal darkness. And I am lying, not on a bed but somewhere very, very high up. I lean over the edge and stare down. Darkness. Without end. I feel that above me in the darkness the infinite black sky hangs lower and lower. And in the sky a terrible, black sun. I do not see it but I feel it. God, it will crush me! It will crush me! . . . And my heart aches so!

. . . . . .

Then I am again in a room. I wake up and I cry. My voice is very, very feeble. I cry, and listen to myself with pleasure. Yes, I am in a room. There in a corner hangs papa's overcoat. No, no, not an overcoat! It is a black monk! But why has he no face and why does he lift his arms to the ceiling? Ah, no . . . not a monk! It is a shadowy papa without a face. He stretches his long, black arms to me. Papa, papa, don't! It is I—Fea, Fea!

. . . . . .

Then—is it the day coming? Black shadows of papa and mama move about, and again they have no faces. But I catch a glimpse of the shining window, and it seems that the sun was there. Then, it seems, night came again. Again everything is dark. And under the ceiling, straight in the air, hung a little girl, all in white. And on the hem of her dress are little drops of blood. Then, it seems, day came again, and again the night. I do not remember how many times. . . .

. . . . . .

Once I woke up, and without opening my eyes I understood that it is morning in the room. I heard mama's voice:

"It is better that she die soon if she is not to get better! What a torture!"

My heart began to tremble with the old, familiar pain. I was about to open my eyes, but I restrained myself. Lord, why did I not die? Why?

I waited till mama walked away, and burst into tears.

. . . . . .

And then the worst came. I developed a tremendous appetite and there was absolutely nothing to eat. Never in my life have I experienced such hunger. Night after night I wept, and almost gnawed my own fingers.

I want to die, to die, to die. . . .

. . . . . .

Yesterday I crept out of bed for the first time. I wrapped myself up and sat at the window. I put my hands on the window-sill. The yard was empty. I could see the wind swaying a birch-tree. In my heart, emptiness. Not a thought in my mind.

Suddenly I saw on the window-sill my outstretched arm, white and thin. I shuddered from head to foot. Then I raised the arm closer to my eyes. It was very, very thin and the skin was tender, almost transparent. It was almost beautiful.

And then, rage flared up in me,—a bottomless, terrible rage against everybody. It flared up and faded away. Swaying, I walked to the bed and lay down again. I crawled under the blanket and sobbed, burying my face in the pillow.

November 16

Little by little I get up and walk around. Mama keeps repeating that I must either get well or die. And I have no strength at all. I wander about the room for half an hour and then lie down again for the rest of the day.

It is all immaterial and I am indifferent to everything. Both to what has happened and to what is yet to come. I suffer pangs of hunger and at night I dream of wheat rolls.

November 20

Still the same. Not the least bit of strength.

November 25

Mama looks at me and cries. She says more and more often:

"It were better you died sooner!"

And sometimes I do not answer, and sometimes I say:

"It's all the same to me."

November 26

This morning I remembered for the first time that there had been no letters from Serezha for a long

time. I quickly asked mama whether a letter had come from him during my illness.

At once, even before she could answer, I understood that there were no letters. Her gray eyes instantly filled with tears, and this was enough for me. I did not say anything further to her, but my heart began to revive and fill with the tears and sorrows of a living being.

And that evening Serezha came unexpectedly. But he was just as thin and terrible as we. All in rags, in the uniform of a military captive. It turned out that he had been sick with typhus for over two months and had refrained from writing in order not to frighten us. During his sickness a fire had broken out at the hospital and his uniform had been burned. It was fortunate that he himself was not burned.

I was lying down as usual when he rang the bell. It did not occur to us that it might be he, and our hearts did not tremble, did not respond to the bell. And suddenly mama's voice came from the kitchen:

"Serezhenka, Serezhenka!"

I did not understand at first,—then Serezha was already entering and coming straight toward my bed. I began to shake as if in the grip of a fever. And suddenly burst into tears.

Serezha brought about thirty pounds of bread.

November 27

I began to grow stronger from then on. In three or four days I intend to go back to work. Only today I noticed for the first time how emaciated they have all become during this time. Especially papa. He has the face of a man in the agonizing torments of death. Mama says that his feet are terribly swollen.

December 1

It seems that during the whole time of my illness they had pottage only twice a week. Bread had been distributed at the usual infrequent intervals. There were days when mama and Borya had nothing but a Soviet dinner. Papa always received his half a pound.

It is impossible for me to imagine how they remained alive on that.

Tomorrow—Sunday. I intend to go to work on Monday.

December 2

Papa, too, has fallen ill.

Today he did not go to work; he lies on his bed, moaning:

"O Lord, O Lord. . . ."

I look at his sunken, bony chest, at his yellow forehead with its seared wrinkles and thin, matted hair; I gaze with a calmly malicious, weary curiosity. Yes, yes, now you have your dose of sickness. I was sick and did not get half a pound extra. And when he rolls his terrible, dull eyes toward me, I turn away indifferently.

And at twelve o'clock Borya's and mama's meals were brought from the dining room. Aha! Papa's card was issued by the factory dining room. Therefore . . . therefore he will go hungry. And he won't get his half pound.

All four of us sit down to eat the Soviet dinner meant for two. And then—papa is trying to rise. He lowers his shrunken, yellow feet from the bed. Little sparks of light gleam in his dull eyes, like in the eyes of an animal. He twitches his thin, gray lips and begins to moan louder, and says:

"Mother, bring me a spoon. . . ."

Without a word, mama put a bench near the bed

and carried over to it the dinner from the table. We squatted around. And he? He also reaches out with his spoon. He sits up in his bed and sways in his weakness; the spoon shakes in his fearfully thin hand, but still it reaches and reaches. . . . We eat rapidly and he cannot keep up with us; I see that his dead eyes are watching this miserable soup. He hastens to swallow, and the spoon rattles against his teeth, against his trembling chin; the soup drips down his bony chest, on to his knees—and the eyes keep watching what remains in the bowl. I see all this, and the old, remembered hatred of him stirs up in me—but there is something of weariness in it now. And besides, I feel so mournful, I want to cry. And I do not understand it: is this sorrow for myself, for papa, or for all of us?

And in the evening, when the pottage was cooked, he asked that some be put near his bed in a separate bowl. With the same weary hatred and mournfulness in my heart, I brought it to his place and put it before him. He swallowed a few spoonfuls and moaned in a wild, animal terror:

"Oh, mother, mother, I cannot eat the pottage. You'd better . . . better buy some eggs and make an omelette. And something sour to go with the tea. . . ."

I was at once aroused to a keen, malicious pleasure. It won't take mama a minute to set him right about this omelette and this "something sour". When I was sick there was nothing like these things for me. And just as I expected! Mama turned red in angry annoyance.

"Are you mad, or what? Where am I to get the money to buy omelettes and sour preserves for you? You must know that yourself."

But he does not comprehend. In terror he mut-

ters that something should be sold. He looks with terrible eyes now at mama, now at me, and mumbles incoherently. And suddenly he closed his eyes, turned to the wall, and grew quiet. And a second later he stammered hopelessly, in a hoarse, weary voice:

"Just as I thought. It's no use expecting help from you. Now I must die. Lord God, forgive us!"

Mama and I heard this groan, and exchanged glances. But neither she nor I say a word to papa. And in the evening I myself offered tea to papa:

"Do you want some tea?"

"Gi-i-ive me. . . ."

I gave him some tea and my own little morsel of bread. Serezha had got it somewhere.

December 3

Today I will go to work for the first time since my illness.

It is still quite dark as I dress. Papa's bed looms black in a corner. He lies in the same position, and moans. The heart grows heavy hearing these moans. Mama has gone out for water.

I dressed wearily, and, I do not know why, walked over to papa. He has not eaten yesterday's bit of bread and his tea is untouched. He lies with his face to the wall. I say to him cautiously:

"I'm off to work."

And he, with his face still to the wall, began to speak, groaning:

"Oh, oh, Feiusha. . . . How can you go on an empty stomach after your illness? You must take the piece I left—yesterday's. I don't want it. . . ."

I was fearfully astonished. For the first time it struck me that he is really sick. As sick as I was. And then I suddenly thought:

"But this is nonsense! He's pretending."

He moans again:

"Did you take it? Well, go, God bless you. . . . Oh, oh! . . ."

"Yes, yes, I've taken it, daddy; get well. . . . I'm going."

I walked out in weary bewilderment. At the gate I meet mama. She is returning with a pail of water. She is all bent, poor thing. She can hardly drag herself along.

Still in the same bewilderment I silently took the pail from her and wanted to carry it up the stairs. I cannot. . . . I say to her:

"He gave me yesterday's piece of bread."

I expected her to answer with sharp, stinging words, but she says sadly:

"All right, go now; God bless you."

I sit at the office, still under the spell of that weary bewilderment. They ask me:

"Feika, why that long face?"

"No-thing, my pa-pa is ve-ry sick . . . maybe he'll die. . . ."

Somebody exclaims in indignant astonishment:

"Why, how calmly she speaks of it! Who'd believe it of her!"

Then I walked home and again got my feet wet. I thought that I would fall sick again, and somehow I felt glad. This time I shall surely, surely die.

And the nearer I came to the house the stronger grew my feeling that this time I would surely die. And this no longer brought joy to my heart, but weary anger against everybody: papa, mama, Borya, and even Serezha.

At home I angrily took off my boots and threw them into a corner. Serezha is lying down, mama is in the

kitchen, papa is moaning. I did not realize that I was approaching his bed. I looked at him, and was deeply moved. He is wrapped in a blanket to the very chin. Above his chest the blanket heaves with his rapid breathing. The head is turned sidewise and the ravaged face is toward me. The eyes are closed and the lips move, raising the tangled mustache. A temple is visible, with the clammy, yellow skin stretched tight over it. Thin wisps of hair hang down from his head and cling to the skin. Lord—his eyes open and gaze at me. How they glisten now! The lips move more firmly, and they tear apart the wet, matted hair of the mustache:

"Fe-i-i-u-u-sha is he-e-re? . . ."

A dizziness seizes me. I look at him as through a mist. And suddenly joy sweeps over me: on the bench stands an omelette and a little bottle of tea-rum. Yes, yes, mama has bought it, in spite of everything! Thank God! I ran to the kitchen to mama:

"Well, how is father?"

And mama dries her eyes with her apron.

"Very bad. He went to the Soviet hospital this morning."

"What do you mean, mama? How could he go—alone?"

"Well, he went, and alone. . . . There was no one to go with him. The doctor said: 'Very dangerous'. He must be sent to the hospital. We are waiting for the ambulance."

"Mamochka, will the ambulance come today?"

"They promised it for today. They will try to cure him in some way at the hospital."

And she looked at me, her eyes begging for something.

"Of course, mamochka, they will give him medicine

at the hospital, and the doctor will see him every day. It will be better there."

I tell this lie because mama's eyes are begging for it.

The ambulance came at ten o'clock this evening. Two stout attendants in white coats entered the room. I gaze at them with terror. They take up a position in the center of the room, under the electric bulb.

Mama is crying and dressing papa, and his lower lip trembles like that of a child. He gazes now at the attendants, now at mama, and breathes out:

"Wh-when will you co-ome to see me?"

"Tomorrow—we'll come tomorrow morning. All of us—all. We'll stay here over night only, and then come. Don't be afraid. We'll come, we'll come."

December 4

In the morning I woke up so terribly tired that to visit the hospital is more than I can bear. I'd rather go to work as usual. I see that Serezha and mama are getting ready to leave. I ask them:

"Shall I go with you?"

They said that they would go by themselves. And I heaved a sigh of relief.

At the office the day dragged slowly by. I longed for it to end. I cannot bear to look at the familiar faces.

Then I walked home. The trams are not running. I make every effort to get my feet wet, so as to catch cold. I unbuttoned my overcoat. The wind is damp and putrid, the street is wet from the drizzling rain. I feel a queer, dull delight rising up in me at the thought that now I shall surely fall sick and die. Surely, surely! My feet are wet and my throat is chilled.

At Kameno-ostrovsky I came to the street of the

Petropavlovsky Hospital. I stopped in dread. Papa is there. I ought to go in to see him. But, oh, how tired I am, how tired! I cannot, I cannot. . . . I'll go on.

For some reason the door of our lodgings is not locked as usual. And because of this my steps become slower and more cautious. I enter quietly. . . . What a dead silence in the house! And the lights have not been turned on. It is dark. They have all retired to their rooms, I suppose. Oh, no, mama is in the kitchen. Why, then, does she not come to meet me? Why is she so still? Her hands are folded in her lap and her head is bent.

With halting steps I approach her. Suddenly mama raises her head and looks at me. What a distorted face, swollen with weeping,—and the eyes are quite mad! She gazes at me for a second, and resumes her former position. And on the floor, at her feet, Boris is crouching. He does not even look up at me.

I did not dare ask her how things were. Stunned, horrified, I cautiously opened the door to our rooms. Serezha is lying on the couch with his face down; he does not turn his head at the sound of my steps. Him, too, I dare not ask. I walked past the couch and sat down in the corner.

In a little while Serezha stirred. My body becomes taut as a string. He said:

"Papa died during the night." . . .

. . . . . .

I do not remember what followed after these words. I must have fallen to the floor writhing in convulsions and howling like a wild beast. When I came to myself I felt a cruel, agonizing pain in my heart. I rose to my knees on the floor. Yes, yes—he died hunted down by us! We even turned him out to die in the hospital.

That is what we did, we, we! . . . No, it was I, I! It is my fault that he died! I fell to the floor again and screamed, this time in a human voice:

"Forgive me, forgive me, father dear! Forgive, forgive!" . . .

. . . . . .

It seems I tried to dash my head against the floor, shrieking in mad terror:

"Forgive, forgive, forgive, forgive, father dear, dear! . . .

Sergei stood over me and shook me by the shoulder: "Spare mama, spare her," he whispered tensely, warningly, but I paid no attention to him and screamed:

"Forgive, forgive, forgive! . . ."

. . . . . .

I found myself in the corner, and I could see mama moving about the room. She had no face. . . . She was doing something at the table. Then a voice floated to me through the air, vaguely:

"Come to dinner!"

"Hasn't he forgiven me?"

"There, that will do, you foolish child."

She took me by the hand and sat me down at the table.

. . . . . .

Then they all fell asleep, but I did not sleep. I kept listening to my heart. It was throbbing:

"He did not forgive, he did not forgive. . . ."

December 6

Papa was buried today.

In the morning we went to the hospital and spent hours searching for his body. We went to the morgue. Naked bodies were lying there, men and women to-

gether. They were piled up on the shelves, their arms and legs dangling down. One had a hand as big and broad as a rake, and the nails were blue. And in the other room they were heaped up on the floor. A mound reaching almost to the ceiling. There is barely room to pass through. I stumbled, and stepped on the body of a woman—her uncovered stomach was huge and inflated. And something gurgled in her stomach. Mitya is walking about among the dead. He pulls them by the head, by the feet. It was a long time before we found papa.

Our dead papa has a very, very thin, round, little neck. Almost like a child's. As soon as I caught sight of his neck I burst into tears. God, how shrunken and thin it is! His face is calm and even pleasant in its repose. The hair is soft, like a child's, and all disheveled. I knelt before him and began to kiss his hair. What a thin, little neck. . . .

Then we put him into a coffin and dragged him after us on a small sleigh. He was light. I would not let the others pull the sleigh. I drag him through the street, and the trams clang their bells and black shadows of people pass by.

We came to the church. I do not weep, but mama is sobbing so bitterly that even the priest looks up curiously. And papa seems to raise his head from the coffin and his little neck is so thin, so thin. . . .

They sing "Where there is no sickness, sorrow, or sighing, but life everlasting." . . . And why did he not forgive me? And why is mama sobbing so? Oh, yes, yes. . . . He has not forgiven her either. That is why his little neck is so thin. Ah! The mass is over now. . . .

I shuddered and seemed to come to myself. I watch mama with jealous eyes. How will she take leave of

him? She approaches, closer. . . . She bends over. . . . And utters a terrible, tortured scream. I see her lips parting. . . . God—what a woman!

Here, for the last time, she kisses papa, not on his lips but on the crown of his head! How I hate her!

I hear Sergei saying:

"Fea, say good-by."

Yes, yes, right now I will kiss him straight on the lips. Not like mama. He will forgive me. I am conscious that Sergei is leading me. I bend over papa, and one of his eyes is half open and his lips are distorted in a stern grimace. And the little neck, the little neck, Lord! . . . Ah! I, too, have kissed him on the crown of the head. I cannot, I cannot kiss his lips. He did not forgive, he did not forgive me!

In madness I rushed out of the church. I ran off, and from the distance looked back at the church gate. In a few minutes they will carry him out.

Papa was carried to the grave. Mama follows close by the coffin, bent almost double, as if about to fall. They support her under the arms. And she sobs and sobs. And I follow from afar.

Then, as if in a dream, we were all throwing earth into the grave—I, too, it seemed. And then we came home and sat down to dinner.

December 7

Yes, papa did not forgive me, he did not.

I rose early today and went to work at eight o'clock. It is still dark, and tiny stars are glistening in the high heavens. Snow fell during the night—and now the fence-posts are wearing shaggy, white caps. On the cross-boards there hangs a white, downy fringe that shines with blue sparklings under the stars. And the white caps on the posts glisten. In the direction of

the First Line the rumble of the early tram is heard.

Through the dark, silent lane I turned to the tram station, and there are the bright car-windows glowing in the distance. Black backs can be discerned through the lighted windows. I mounted the platform and started back in dread. The odor of dead bodies rises from the bright car, as from a morgue.

I raised my handkerchief to my nose, but the smell penetrates through the handkerchief. I am dizzy, nauseated. I ran out into the street again and proceeded on foot.

At the office, too, the smell of decomposing bodies clung about me all day. Before closing time I timidly asked Marusya:

"Marusya, don't you smell something here?"

"No—why?"

"Well, nothing; it seems to smell of . . . herring."

I went back in a tram and the same odor was there. But at home there was no disgusting smell.

We ate our pottage in silence. Mama wept quietly and monotonously. I feel that her eyes regard me strangely when she thinks that I am not watching her. And as soon as I look up she turns away. When she goes out to the kitchen I stare at the back of her neck with a heavy look of hatred. . . .

A MERE TRIFLE!

FIRST OF ALL, A WHIRL OF DUST APPEARED ON THE narrow road. Then a rhythmical stamping rose out of the dust. In a few minutes sounds of trumpets rose above the stamping. At last, brass glistened in the sun, and it became clear that troops were entering the city.

It proved to be but a single regiment. About five-hundred dirty, dusty, grimy men, weather-beaten, ragged, heavily armed with rusty rifles, knives, and bombs.

Some of them were mounted. When the first narrow street became filled with noise, clatter, and snorting, and when the horses' hoofs began to rattle over the narrow boardwalks, the miserable Jewish houses and shops seemed to darken and shrink.

The hard, square-jawed, hairy faces, the jangling and clamor, the smell of leather and of the fields brought by the detachment, their straggling ranks, and the absence of flags—all this augured evil.

At the head of the column rode a little, weazened man in a gymnasium uniform, a dirty, red ribbon across his chest, in his hand a long *nagaika,* a green twig in his hat, and an accordion slung at his side.

After him, also on horseback, came a round, corpulent man, with a fat neck and with narrow slits instead of eyes, and a wide, open, toothless, and crooked mouth. One could easily picture four fingers inserted into that mouth, and a deafening bandit's whistle issuing therefrom and reverberating through the fields.

The two men were followed by the regiment band; one drummer, two flute-players, one man with a brass

horn, and two or three others with sundry ill-assorted instruments. And behind them: a multi-faced, multi-eyed, noisy, sweaty crowd, mounted and on foot, laden with iron, leather, bags, bread, hay, dust, and cheap tobacco.

In one little house a shutter closed by itself with a woeful bang. An old Jew stuck his head out of his little shop and before he had time to see anything, disappeared. A dog, which had twice witnessed bloody pogroms, ran out of the gate, stopped, gazed sadly at the approaching detachment, and, with lowered head, began to howl in prolonged and doleful tones.

Somebody in a black shirt and in glasses was already rushing in a straight line through the backyards, jumping across the streets, like across ditches, to the local Ispolcom.

The incoming regiment, unknown and nondescript, took possession of the bathhouse. Sentries appeared at all the entrances and exits—some in bast shoes, some in boots, others barefoot, but all with cylindrical bombs dangling from their belts or girdle ropes. In addition, each held a rifle or a "saw-off," *i.e.,* the same rifle, only with a shortened barrel and minus the bayonet. In the daytime these sawed-off guns were used to shoot pigs and chickens, and at night they served for aimless shooting in the air. No one from the regiment reported to the town authorities.

They roasted the quarry of pigs and chickens, chopped wood, bathed their horses in the river.

In the evenings they sang songs and hunted girls in the gardens.

On the third day, early in the morning, they arrested an old Jew in the streets and brought him to the bathhouse, where a jolly company was feasting. The

Jew was given some eggs to eat. He refused. Then two men began to load their rifles. The Jew began to eat. When he opened his white, trembling lips, one of the men shouted to him:

"How dare you gobble, you sheeny mug? Them ain't your eggs!"

And they laughed uproariously under the dark arches of the bathhouse.

An hour later they let the Jew go.

The communists were mobilized during the night. In the morning the Gubispolcom, seventy versts away, was called up over the direct line. In reply the Gubispolcom requested accurate information. This meant that there would be no aid, or, at any rate, that aid would not come soon. And the reason for this was quite clear: the president of the Gubispolcom had gone to Moscow on business, and his successor was a milksop.

It was Comrade Brilliant, the president of the local county Ispolcom, who had called up.

He had a white nose, a high, white forehead, a red face, steady, unblinking eyes, and was never without a contemptuously bored expression on his lips. He bore the aspect of a man who has a clear knowledge of a certain something, but who has no intention of telling it to all and sundry. Besides, he knew how to listen attentively, and, having listened, to answer not at all. He was respected, and to a certain extent feared.

When he hung up the receiver he was approached by Comrade Yezhekevich, president of the local cheka.

Pulling down with his thumb the belt of his military sweater, and emphasizing by his tone that everything was clear to him and that it was needless to ask how

things stood in his cheka, Yezhekevich said, after a resolute, stern pause:

"Give me communists! All the communists you can gather!"

He knew that there were altogether about seventy communists in the town, and that about one-third of them were women, all of them swarthy, bob-haired, bookish girls. Besides, even the male communists were not yet trained to military duty. He knew all this, and Brilliant understood that Yezhekevich was first of all trying to remove from his own shoulders the burden of responsibility for what might happen.

Brilliant gave no answer, but he thought that this was no way of deciding the matter. The local cheka had a detachment of thirty or forty men. This would not save the situation.

In the neighboring room there sounded the coughing of a Petrograd sailor, Comrade Stepanov. Spreading wide his elbows on the table, he sat there, writing and coughing.

"What are you writing, Stepanov?" asked Brilliant.

"A letter."

"How is your cough? Any better?"

"Ah, hell with it. . . ."

Stepanov had consumption. Brilliant knew it and had spoken about the cough only to say something. He did not want to be the first to speak about the danger that threatened the town.

In the waiting-room about ten people were gathered. All of them unkempt, disheveled, bearing the marks of sleepless nights, and, on their faces, an expression of deadly fear. These were the well-to-do townsmen who had hastened to apply for permission to leave the town. They quivered with nervous impatience and hung about the slightly open door, endeavoring to peep

in and, at least, to see Brilliant. One could hear them arguing with the orderly, who kept repeating in a sulky voice:

"It's not urgent. Everything's urgent. There's a lot of you, and I'm only one."

"I've just called up the Gub," said Brilliant.

"What about?" asked Stepanov.

"Well, about these bandits."

Stepanov stopped writing.

"That is, about this regiment? But they are fools. I was there. They're all Ukrainians, the sons of ——. I wouldn't let that sort have a share in the Revolution. The damned dogs! You can't tell who they are. Are they ours, or just a band? In short—guerrillas. There's some skunk among 'em who's stirring up trouble. On the whole they're not so bad, but some of them say—'Long live the Bolsheviks, down with the communists and the Jews!' Ignorance, of course; they ought to be frisked into shape a bit, and I'll go there again today. At first they didn't want to let me inside the bathhouse, but I began to cuss. So they let me in. They have a lot of booze. That's bad. The booze ought to be taken away from them."

"Hold on. Don't crowd," again the orderly grumbled behind the door. "Everybody's business is urgent. There are many of you here."

A clamor arose. A shrill cry was heard: "This is a public affair. Delay is unthinkable!"

The orderly came into the room, cruelly slamming the door shut with his elbow, so that it struck against an eager head outside.

"Comrade Brilliant, the druggist insists on speaking with you. He says it's very urgent."

"Let him in."

The former town druggist, Lysevich, entered, cor-

pulent, yellow; his face, politely respectful, expressed alarm and fear.

Brilliant questioned him with a glance.

"I had no time to explain it in writing," he began, folding his trembling hands like a singer and bending politely. "I apologize. . . . The fact is that clouds have gathered over the horizon of our town. Great troubles are ahead. The disorganized invaders begin to make arbitrary searches. Agitation for pogroms is beginning. There are no troops in the city. They are all at the front. Therefore, I deem it my duty, forgive my boldness, in view of the fact that this is a public affair and that though all the stores are sealed, they still contain a great deal of people's property, and they want to start to plunder—therefore, I suggest that an urgent call be sent for Comrade Trotsky. There are no troops in the vicinity, and Comrade Trotsky has a train. He will come quickly, without delay, and will reëstablish order."

Brilliant listened, and looked at the druggist as if he were some inanimate object. Stepanov sighed in sheer boredom, opened his mouth, spat to the middle of the room across the table at which he was sitting, and said with a pensive contempt:

"Gee, this chap can jabber. . . ."

Brilliant said quietly:

"Go away. Don't waste my time."

The druggist was embarrassed but not discomfited.

"It will be very sad if all that the Revolution has attained will be lost. Twice already we have had pogroms. Once in the time of Denikin, and the second time . . ."

"I told you to go. Please don't worry about these things."

The telephone bell rang sharply. From the "First

House of the Soviets," at one time Roizman's "Hotel Neapol," they were asking whether the communists and the "responsible workers" were to start out.

Brilliant asked who was speaking—it was a woman's voice. She became confused, and Brilliant heard, in a hasty masculine tenor, "Don't, don't tell who it is." Brilliant, nevertheless, recognized by the voice who it was that had made his wife create a panicky atmosphere. It was one of his comrades of the local Ispolcom.

"This is . . . this . . . well, I just wanted to ask . . ."

The receiver at the other end was hung up. Brilliant left the telephone.

And soon after the Ispolcom quarters became filled with tense animation. A group of the mobilized communists arrived. They inquired about the arms and the supplies. The telephone rang again and again. Somebody, for some unknown reason, was tying a cord about his waist. Ink was spilled over the table. Two men wanted to pass simultaneously through the narrow door, collided, and stuck foolishly in the doorway. The door squeaked and creaked. The commandant of the house, a young man with luxurious, yellow mustaches, darted from room to room. It was reported that the machine gun was already in position downstairs. Who had given the order to put a machine gun there? No one knew. Two men sat on the table, swinging their legs. No attention had been paid to them, and nobody knew who they were. They proved to be two communists on their way through the town. A heavy clatter of many feet was heard in the corridor. They belonged to the Red students, who were also temporarily lodged in the town. Eleven of them. Somebody in the middle of the room was eating a herring and, winking preposterously

to the others, shook his free fist and shouted senselessly, imitating the Red Army yell at the front:

"Give up the bathhouse!"

The special joint conference of the Plænum of the Soviet with the representatives of all the Trades-unions was set for two o'clock in the afternoon.

The meeting-room was adorned more carefully than usual. The pictures of Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky, bedecked with red ribbons, looked solemn and resolute. The windows were wide open. The bell near Brilliant's chair shone with a holiday glitter. A sentry guard, with cartridges and rifles, appeared at each door. Similar sentinels took their post downstairs at the entrance. The sentry captain, with his whistle, walked busily from one to another. In the rooms adjacent to the meeting-room about thirty men were in readiness.

The order of the day included: (1) "On the present situation," a report by Comrade Brilliant. (2) "Current business."

After calling the meeting to order, Brilliant, with the unchanging, bored expression on his face, proposed first of all that they rise to honor the memory of Comrade Gulko, secretary of the Fuel Commission, who had recently been called to arms and who had fallen heroically at the front.

"In his person," said Brilliant, "perished one of the best sons of the proletariat. Workers and peasants will never forget their first-rank fighter. We must unite over his grave and swear that we will carry to the end the cause for which Comrade Gulko fought with such self-sacrificing spirit."

The meeting rose. Those who wore hats took them off.

Brilliant gave the sign permitting them to sit down. They resumed their seats.

The secretary, Urchik, cast a frightened, sidelong glance at Brilliant, and shouted:

"Comrade Brilliant has the floor."

A movement in the crowd. Coughing. Blowing of noses. And then a tense silence.

Brilliant arose and, waving a pencil like a conductor's baton, he informed the meeting that a large, well-armed detachment of guerilla fighters had entered the town. The detachment, apparently, did not recognize the Soviet power. Their representatives had not reported, either to the Soviet or to the military authorities. Small armed bands were making arbitrary searches, were arresting peaceful citizens in the streets and subjecting them to indignities. The quarters arbitrarily occupied by the detachment were being frequented by the evil elements of the town, former butchers and shopkeepers, who were agitating for pogroms. All this should, under no circumstances, be tolerated. Resistance must be offered to the armed, disunited band.

"At the time when the best sons of the proletariat and of the advance guard of the peasants are shedding their blood on many fronts for the workers' and peasants' power," he continued,—in intonation and in manner of speech obviously imitating Trotsky,—"at this very time the petty bourgeoisie, egged on by the mensheviks, social revolutionists, and anarchists, attempts from the rear to disorganize the power of the Soviets, and to deal a cowardly blow to the peasants' and workers' Revolution. But in this they will not succeed! Their daring hand must be struck down! We must say resolutely to the black hirelings of the bourgeoisie: 'Hands off!' "

Brilliant sat down. The gathering applauded.

The secretary again cast a scared look at Brilliant and shouted:

"I ask for the floor on a point of order. And I have a motion to make."

"I, too, ask for the floor! I! I! I ask for the floor!"

The one who so turbulently demanded the floor was a menshevik, Kleiner. He was greatly excited and his lower lip trembled noticeably. Almost simultaneously he kept pulling and adjusting, with both hands, his pince-nez, his coat-collar, and his hair. And before he could obtain the privilege of the floor, he turned to the audience and began:

"I protest! This is an insinuation! Where did Comrade Brilliant get the idea that the regiment is being egged on by the mensheviks? He has no evidence! This is demagogy! This is provocation!"

Pandemonium ensued.

"You haven't been given the floor!" said Brilliant.

"Quiet!"

"Don't talk from your places!"

"Order, please!"

"Quiet!"

"Quiet!"

"This is no time for quarreling!"

"This is provocation! This is demagogy!" Kleiner outshouted them all.

"Quiet!"

"Comrades! Comrades!"

"Let him speak!"

"Silence!"

"Order, please!"

The sharp ringing of the bell.

"Comrades!" said Brilliant. "We have no time for

polemics now. Please remain calm. Those who disturb the order of the meeting"—he raised his voice—"will be excluded from the room. Comrade Urchik has the floor."

Urchik scratched his head and began:

"Comrades! Since time is pressing and the situation is serious . . ."

"Come to the point, comrade! To the point. . . ."

"I am talking to the point and I move to omit discussion of Comrade Brilliant's report. And at the same time, I wish to submit a resolution to you. Who is for closing the discussion? Please raise your hands. A majority. Allow me to offer the resolution."

"Proceed."

"The combined conference of the Plænum of the Soviet and the representatives of the Trades-unions, having heard the report of Comrade Brilliant about the invasion of the town by a disorganized band, has unanimously decided to adopt energetic measures toward the termination of the invasion, in view of the possibility of disorders of a nature to threaten the great proletarian Revolution. The working out of concrete measures is to be entrusted to the Ispolcom of the Soviet, with the right of co-optation."

The resolution was adopted unanimously. They sang the "International", and dispersed.

In the evening a weird spell hung over the town. It could be sensed at twilight, when the streets were deserted, and a stray, lonely cow, returning from the pasture, stood in the middle of the main street and by her drawn-out, mournful lowing expressed her surprise at the unusual emptiness.

The clear sky, aglow with bright sunset, seemed aloof, guardedly unconcerned. The smoke from the chimneys of the little, low houses rose like thin bands

of mourning-crêpe. From time to time sounds of scattered shots were heard.

There were almost no wayfarers. Very, very infrequently, a hasty step was heard and quickly died away. Someone came, walking guardedly and hastily, along the narrow planking; he kept turning his eyes back, as if in fear. At a crossing, near a pole covered with tattered posters, he stopped, glued his eyes to the "Compulsory Regulations" of the preceding year, and then disappeared at the turn of the road.

The weird spell deepened with the darkness. And in a number of houses there were no lights. Dogs barked and howled.

For fully half an hour the church bells rang cautiously, secretly rejoicing and enticing, although it was not a holiday.

At night the wind swayed the trees, drove rubbish along the pavement, tugged at the closed shutters.

A stranger's cart rattled by.

A drunkard who had lost his way sang in the darkness and mumbled drunken nonsense to the howling of the wind.

And again, weird, oppressive darkness.

At the "First House of the Soviets," in a little room that had a crooked washstand and a creaking floor, a conference of the Ispolcom with the co-opted delegates was in progress.

Brilliant sat at a card-table, and calmly and seriously, as usual, asked for an expression of opinions as to the existing situation.

"Please limit yourselves to practical suggestions, since the issue as a whole is sufficiently clear," he said. Then, looking attentively at those present, he asked:

"Where is Comrade Stepanov?"

There was no answer.

But at that moment steps were heard in the corridor; the door opened. Stepanov walked in and stopped in the middle of the room.

All turned to him questioningly and expectantly.

"All quiet, so far," he said in a low voice, restraining his cough. "Last night about twenty men left the bathhouse and set out, not toward the town but toward the outskirts. They must have gone to the village for supplies. Otherwise everything is quiet. They brought girls to the bathhouse and started the devil of a time, the sons of ——."

"The depot is secure," said the commander of the communist detachment. "Four machine guns and thirty comrades, six students among them, are already at their posts. The locality is elevated, so that in case of attack we will be able to hold out for a time."

Brilliant reported in an off-hand, business-like tone.

"Yes, comrades. At six o'clock tonight I received the information that the workers of the match-factory, a number of foundrymen, and some leather-workers have formed a detachment, and under command of two students have fortified themselves in the suburbs."

"What are these patrols in the streets?"

"They are ours," said Stepanov. "I checked them up."

Brilliant, without changing his expression or his pose—he was bending over a sheet of paper—hinted only through the gleam in his eyes that he was about to say something important, and, maintaining the proper pause after the word "Comrades!"—he began:

"Comrades, all the precautions taken against possible complications are, of course, very proper. But we must fully realize the existing situation. We will not be able to cope with it with our own strength, and

there is no place from which we may expect help. The circumstances are very unfavorable for us in this respect. I consider it advisable, therefore, that all our military preparations should be conducted with all possible secrecy and caution. And as our next and immediate step, I propose the following: since the partisans do not permit anyone to enter their quarters, and since Comrade Stepanov has managed to get in there only with difficulty, I propose that tomorrow the whole detachment be invited—in the usual way, pretending that we know nothing of their conduct—to the theater, for a concert or a performance, and before the performance to ask Comrade Belyakov, who happens to have come to us from Moscow,—to talk to the regiment and to clear up the situation. At the same time, in case the regiment's coming to the theater brings no satisfactory results, I propose to adopt measures for surrounding the theater and disarming the regiment, at all costs!"

Brilliant uttered the last sentence in a raised voice, and again with a manfully distinct intonation, characteristic of Trotsky.

Fifteen minutes later the carrying out of Brilliant's plan had begun—but as yet only in its preliminary phases.

Stepanov was appointed Commandant of the theater and organizer of the concert-meeting. Belyakov, who was staying at the hotel, was instructed to prepare for his appearance at the theater on the morrow, and two girls, Nadya and Tatyana, took upon themselves the task of transmitting to the regiment of partisans the invitation to the concert-gathering. These girls were members of the Divisional Politotdyel, and had, a few days ago, come from the front to buy a supply of stationery.

Toward one in the morning the meeting dispersed.

Stepanov walked out into the dark street. The wind was howling in the darkness, making the glass rattle in the twisted lantern that had not been lit for two years.

He strolled along the street. Somewhere to one side, quite nearby, a shot rang out. He took a revolver from his hip pocket and cautiously advanced in the direction of the shot. He covered about two hundred paces. Silence. No one stirred. Silence and the wind.

But the night was full of unrest. Steps, voices, a treacherous rustling, seemed to arise.

The church bells began ringing again. Cautiously, discordantly.

Stepanov stood with tightly clenched teeth and listened, staring into the ominous, windy darkness, and not knowing how to unburden his bitterness, pain, yearning, fatigue, and anger, he sighed heavily, and, shaking his head to the rhythm of his words and spitting, he poured forth fearful curses into the night.

The dawn began to break.

The first cock crowed—piercingly, with idiotic shrillness and conceit.

The tired, cracked whistling of an engine responded from the depot. A train arrived.

Gloomy passengers with their bags soon appeared. A large family, with a load of pillows, bags, and pots, dragged by on a springless carriage. It was headed by a lean, deft papa, clad in a military jacket, obviously a nomadic fugitive. With habitual keenness he looked about him, not yet fully understanding but already scenting that he had chosen a bad time to come to this town.

On his head a dirty cap had glumly and strangely

slipped down low over his forehead; over his ears and the back of his head something crouched and bristled, like the arched shadow of a crouching cat.

Stepanov, who, without undressing, had been dozing for about an hour on his unmade cot at the "First House of the Soviets," awoke, coughed, and, swaying from fatigue, came out into the corridor. In the morning light, unshaven, sick, exhausted by endless privations, aged by the Revolution—he nevertheless looked little older than his thirty years, though ordinarily one would take him for forty. Advancing a few steps, and, as he walked, fighting off the desire to sleep, he proceeded toward the exit, but stopped suddenly, remembering something. For a moment he stood in thought, then he returned to the corridor and knocked on the door of the room occupied by the girls from the Politotdyel, Nadya and Tatyana. The door was open. The sailor entered. The girls lay sleeping, covered with a soldier's coat.

"Comrade, ho, comrade!" he woke one of them. "What's the matter?"

"Now, look here. . . . I forbid you to go to the regiment to invite them to the theater. . . . That means, you must not go. . . ."

"Why?"

"Because. The actors will go. I'll send them. Do you understand? So much for that."

"But why, Comrade Stepanov?"

"I order it, that's all. Why and why! Because no gang will do harm to the actors. Even the hoodlums are fond of those fellows, the actors. You will come to the theater later. You may be needed there."

He walked out into the corridor and again advanced toward the exit, but once more he retraced his steps. This time he returned to his room, where he took

from the table pen and ink and a sheet of paper, and then passed with these things to the kitchen. There an incredibly disheveled, barefoot creature was hastily rising from the floor, lifting at the same time his thin, worn mattress; it was one of those strange, pitiful, homeless creatures that can be found only in Russia in the kitchens of remote country taverns and hotels.

"Look here, comrade," said Stepanov, "get me some hot water for tea, quick as you can."

While the "comrade" went out of the room to get the hot water, Stepanov sat at the kitchen table, and, carefully tracing each letter, he wrote:

"The Ispolcom of the Soviet of the Workers' and Peasants' Delegates of —— City, sends as an extraordinary order the instruction to the First Government Theater, today (at —— o'clock) to mobilize its best forces and to give a performance and a concert for the guerilla detachment now quartered in the town.

"In case of non-compliance with the order the guilty will be called to strict account."

Stepanov read over what he had written, and was satisfied; then after a moment's thought he added:

"The actors are also ordered to play with inspiration."

Swallowing tea from a dirty, blue cup, he read the order once more, and then went to Brilliant's room for signature and seal.

Brilliant was not in.

Brilliant's wife, President of the local Department of the People's Education, was dressed in a petticoat and was frying potatoes on a "Primus" cooker; she informed Stepanov that her husband had gone to the Soviet quarters, where he was conversing over the direct wire with the Gubispolcom.

The wooden building of the one and only local theater resembled, in its style of architecture, a combination of synagogue and circus. However, at the main entrance there was a portico supported by two columns, and on the small square before the theater there still stood an arch, adorned with green branches, bearing the inscription: "Welcome, Comrade Delegates!"—for the conference of the county soviets had recently been in session at the theater.

Inside, the theater consisted of two tiers and an abnormally large and roomy stage.

The walls, the foyer, and the buffet-room were covered with motley posters, for some reason mostly in connection with public health: "Syphilitics, do not use alcohol." "The louse is a carrier of typhus," etc.

When Stepanov, not finding Brilliant at the Soviet, arrived at the theater, the gathering had already been warned about the coming extraordinary concert-meeting, and also informed of the fact that he, Stepanov, had been appointed Commandant of the theater. During the night, in fact, Brilliant had himself conveyed this information to the president of the company, over the private wire.

This president, who was also stage manager, organizer of the company—a futurist painter, poet, and playwright, author of the plays: "The Red Star," "The Red Sentinel," "The Red Hero," and "The Red Front,"—Comrade Valerianov—was already there, and he met Stepanov with an expression of resolute earnestness:

"Well," he asked, "how are things? Those fellows will be here at three o'clock."

"What do you mean at three o'clock? Have they agreed to come?"

"Why, certainly! Early in the morning I sent, in

accordance with the instructions of Comrade Brilliant, two accordion players. One is still playing there at the bathhouse, and the other returned and informed us that the regiment would be at the theater at three o'clock. We are now rehearsing for their benefit a revolutionary Ukrainian opera with plenty of *hopaks*. Comrade Brilliant instructed us to go easy on politics. So we'll give them *hopaks*. It's really the better way. Comrade Belyakov, from Moscow, will work on those fellows. He'll be able to manage them by himself. Is he a good propagandist?"

"Yes. So the regiment will arrive at three o'clock?"

"At three. And tell me, Comrade Stepanov, why were arrests made all night long? My brother was arrested; he is a dentist; he's never meddled in politics. Why? The whole of the intelligentsia was arrested. I think it was quite unnecessary."

"I don't know. Wait. We must get ready. How many entrances and exits are there in your theater? Come, show me."

Toward three o'clock, when the bathhouse stirred into animation, when horses were being saddled, when bales of hay were tied to the saddles, and, in general, when the regiment made ready to come forth, the town seemed to die out. The girls from the few Soviet institutions that were open on that day, scattered to their homes. Some of them were met in the street by alarmed mothers and sisters, disheveled, wearing shawls hastily thrown over their shoulders. Burghers peeped out of gates and doors, their faces expressive of fright. Some of the bolder ones ventured out upon the street, glanced to right and left, and returned to the gate to tell the news. Some windows displayed

icons standing out against the background of white towels.

At three o'clock the regiment moved toward the center of the town, passing through the Third Lane to the main street, formerly Skobelevskaya, but now known as Communist Street.

In front rode the same little, weazened man who had headed the regiment on its entrance into the town. Following him, the same portly fellow with the crooked mouth. Leaning far over the saddle, he was angrily and energetically impressing something upon the little man, adorning his loud talk with vile oaths, and madly swinging over the horse's mane his huge fist, in which a *nagaika* was clutched.

At the corner that had once been the most "aristocratic" part of the main street, near the druggist's, the photographer's, and the branch bank, now shut down, he apparently succeeded in convincing the weazened chap, and—the regiment halted.

The rifles, which most of the soldiers, marching afoot, held in their hands and not slung across their backs, banged against the pavement, almost as if they belonged to a company of regulars. A few men from the vanguard struck their horses and, for some unknown purpose, galloped over the narrow boards of the sidewalk to the rear.

The weazened leader slowly turned his horse and nodded his head in the direction of his portly mate. The latter opened his enormous mouth and yelled—in so savage a voice that to the scared burghers hiding in their homes it seemed to resound not only through the entire street but through the whole town:

"Kozyava! Kozyava-a-a! . . ."

In the sudden stillness of the halted march, and in the disquieting, nervously watchful hush enveloping

the streets and the houses, his voice really thundered stridently sharp and deafening, like in a forest.

"Kozyava-a-a! . . ."

A husky youth, clad in gingham trousers and a white sailor shirt, barefoot, and with two revolvers strung to his belly, started to shove his way through the crowd.

"Here I am!"—he approached his superiors.

Then the portly man and Kozyava engaged in a long conversation, which ended in a very strange way: the corpulent fellow suddenly advanced his horse toward Kozyava, kicked him in the chest with his boot, and swished the *nagaika* sharply across his head.

The regiment proceeded on its way. This was, apparently, only a family misunderstanding. . . .

Everything at the theater was ready for the reception of the unusual audience.

Behind the stage, in one of the dressing rooms, sat Brilliant and the propagandist Belyakov, and close by stood Stepanov, reporting with some concern that the band, fully armed, was approaching, horses and all.

Brilliant considered for a moment, and said:

"Not important. But, shift the sentry from behind the stage to some place nearer the exit, so that in case of trouble those chaps will think that the theater is surrounded."

Stepanov, who was silently disagreeing with some of Brilliant's orders, waved his hand and went to carry out the command with an air that seemed to say: "Very well; I'll do it—let's see what will come of it." He transferred six men armed with rifles from the nearby dressing room, and sent them below, concealing them behind the coat hangers of a clothes-press.

The actors, in their costumes and make-up, were

meekly sitting in the two remaining dressing rooms, smoking and whispering:

"I tell you, this will end in a coup."

"Last week a man came from Moscow. . . . You know, Drutik, the architect, has a brother . . . well, the man is an acquaintance of his. . . . He said that the same thing is going on in Moscow. . . . A complete coup. Lenin has already left for Smolensk . . . yes . . . yes . . . you needn't doubt it. . . ."

"I can tell you, from a reliable source, that Lenin has arrested Trotsky. . . ."

"It's true . . . I heard the same thing. . . ."

"Brilliant will be appointed instead of Trotsky. . . . It's a fact. . . ."

"That's possible"—(a woman's voice). "Did you see the new coat his wife is wearing—homely mug!"

"And yesterday. . . . Oh, the goings-on, yesterday! . . . Arrests all over the city—but at Roizman's Hotel they spent the night drinking. . . . Sh-sh. . . . They're coming. . . ."

Tumult, stamping, clanging, the sound of voices and the creaking of chairs, came from the foyer and from the pit.

The regiment had arrived.

Before entering the theater the regiment surrounded it. As at the bathhouse, all entrances and exits were covered by guards; the horses were tied to the banisters at the main entrance, to the pillars of the portico, and to the lamp-posts farther up the square.

Small patrols were stationed at the adjacent street-crossings.

The rest of the crowd filled the theater.

The stage presented the setting of the first act of the "Ukrainian opera": the entrance to a tavern, a smithy, trees at the sides.

The curtain was up.

When the regiment had settled down, Belyakov walked out rapidly, came close to the footlights, and began at once:

"Comrades! The whole world is enveloped in the flame of Revolution. The toilers of all lands are awakening from age-long sleep and under the banner of the Third Communist International are waging a struggle against the tsars, landlords, and capitalists. . . ."

Belyakov suddenly felt a queer, uneasy sensation in his legs. The empty, lighted stage on which he stood, alone, facing a hostile mass of men ready for anything, men who sat there armed with knives, bombs, and loaded rifles, seemed to him enormous in size. More than one in the audience held his rifle vertically, resting the butt-end on his knee and keeping a coarse finger on the trigger, with the unconscious readiness of a wandering peasant torn from his fields.

When, during the speech, in the tense silence, a door suddenly banged somewhere in the gallery, a few figures jumped up abruptly with panicky, peasant-like fright, and magazine-locks clicked strangely and weirdly in the lighted theater. . . .

But the speech, imperceptibly hastened in tempo,—continued, and its calmly resolute rhythm did more in that exigency to tranquillize the audience than any special appeals for order could have accomplished.

At any moment he might have been killed. He was a living target for every one of these several hundred men who were torn away from their foundations, removed from their habitual environment, turned upside down by the whirlwind, disturbed, suffering, seeking for truth in mud and blood, confused, and carried away by an incomprehensible, primitive power.

To them he was strange and alien—a city-dweller, thin-legged, with a pointed beard and two queer lenses in the pince-nez that clung to the narrow bridge of his nose.

What does he want with them? Why should they listen to his words? And what is there in these words that they should be constantly uttered at all the fairs, izbas, fields, and highways? Why is there so much bloodshed because of these words? Why do peaceful people, kind and industrious, take up rifles and shoot unhesitatingly into the breasts, faces, heads, of men like themselves? And, in general, why is there shooting at all the borders, turnpikes, roads, towns, villages?

"Comrades! To our lot has fallen the great honor to be the first to raise the world revolution. We were the first to free ourselves from the yoke of the Tsar, the landlords, the capitalists, the generals, and the gendarmes. . . ."

Belyakov did not know the emotional processes of his audience.

A practiced and bold propagandist, he was astonishingly unobservant. What he said seemed to him so clear, simple, and obvious that he was sincerely amazed whenever he was not understood. At meetings, when he had to answer questions, he replied with the embarrassment with which parents answer children's queries about the universally known mysteries of life. He seldom prepared his speeches beforehand and he would probably have experienced a certain embarrassment had there happened to be in the audience any of his personal friends, and particularly his fiancée, so simple did the context of his speeches appear to him.

And this organic conviction which he had assimilated with his whole being: that there was nothing

remarkable in his words, that they were accessible and should be accessible to the mind of even the least developed person—this conviction imparted to his words a peculiar work-a-day character, that at times bordered on carelessness. He did not hesitate to use foreign words. He spoke of the most sublime hopes of humanity for equality and fraternity, without any pathos, and with an air as if they were the most practical of problems; one needs but to bring the will to bear, and the goal is attained, and, actually, it is being attained and will be attained. And this absence of pathos, the infinite simplicity of his tone and of his manner of speaking, set over against the magnitude and weight of the subject, were permeated with a peculiar force and power to convince.

It was nothing to him to pass from words about the final goal of socialism to questions about the division of land, mobilization, deserters, transportation, and what not. And as he spoke of these things, they sounded reassuringly familiar, and yet strangely novel, and finally, so simple, within the experience and grasp of all.

The mottoes: "Everything for transportation!" "Everything for the front!" "Everything for reconstruction!"—always and at all times, *"everything"*—sounded so natural on his lips, that it would have seemed strange if in his appeals he had made any reservations whatsoever.

. . . But the strange uneasiness in his legs persisted. He realized that he might be killed, and the preposterousness of what might happen, the preposterousness of suffering or death for that which is so simple and clear—irritated him and imparted to his words passion, and that peculiar tenseness which influences

the crowd in the same degree as a speaker's tranquil composure.

"Comrades! Is it possible that you, peasants and workers, will turn against your brothers who are shedding blood at many a battlefront for you and for your freedom? Is it possible that you will help the hangmen-generals to deprive the peasants of their land, and the workers of their factories? Comrades! . . ."

"We've heard all that!" a sharp voice resounded from the hall.

"Yarns! You can sing the old sweet song all right!" spoke up a second voice.

But all the rest were silent, and the closing words of the speaker rolled over this silence like balls down the smooth bowling-rack, clear and ringing, one after the other:

"The Ispolcom of the Soviet received a telegram today saying that a division of troops is proceeding here from the front. They are expected to enter the town tonight. We are sure, comrades, that you will know how to remove from your midst those who bar the way to your carrying out your duty to the Republic. We are sure that the unorganized band of peasants and workers will be converted into a well-disciplined part of the Red Army and will bravely and valiantly fight in the ranks for the power of the toilers. Long live the Red Army! . . . Long live the Soviet rule of the workers and peasants!"

Applause resounded in the hall, intermingled with indignant shouts, tumult, whistling, and swearing.

Belyakov turned, intending to go, but he suddenly felt that it would be a mistake to leave at that moment. He raised his hand, as if intending to say something, and just then Brilliant and Stepanov appeared from behind the stage.

"Comrades!" Brilliant began, in a loud voice, and very solemnly. "In the name of the Soviet of the Workers' and Peasants' Delegates of this town, I welcome the Red guerilla fighters and give them until three o'clock in the morning to surrender their arms for the purpose of reorganizing the regiment into a first-rate detachment of the Red Army. . . ."

Someone behind the stage turned out the lights. Wild shouts, stamping, and clamor filled the darkness. Two shots rang out almost simultaneously with a deafening crash. Brilliant and Belyakov wanted to go behind the scenes to turn on the lights, but Stepanov detained them, grabbing them by the arm and shouting frenziedly:

"You'll have light in a minute! Quiet! Quiet!"

The lights were turned on, and in the hush that followed, his voice rang out, gently expostulating, not in the least excited:

"What's the matter with you, comrades? Are you crazy? Who did the shooting? What's all this nonsense about? If anybody'll carry on this way again, I'll put him out of the theater. The performance will begin right now. You've all heard the order of the Soviet, haven't you? You may surrender your arms here at the theater to me personally, or to the Comrade-Commandant of the town."

When Brilliant, Belyakov, and Stepanov turned to leave, the band began to play and the actors in their make-up were already coming out upon the stage.

That was the opening of the revolutionary Ukrainian opera with *hopaks*.

A week later, when the energetic president of the Gubispolcom returned from Moscow and inquired of Brilliant, over the telephone, as to what had hap-

pened, Brilliant, who had actually forgotten many details of the incident, and who was up to his neck in urgent and complicated work, related the events in a few words and in the manner of one who can imagine no other outcome. Then he drew a brief conclusion:

"A mere trifle."

GLOSSARY

The new political phraseology in Russia is replete with contractions and abbreviations. Department of the Interior, for instance, would be popularly called DEPINT. It was considered advisable to retain these names and other characteristic Russian words in the text. Definitions are given here. Hyphens between syllables indicate a contraction of more than one word.

BOURZHUI—Bourgeois.

CHE-KA—The Extraordinary Commission to Combat Counter-revolution and Speculation; later reorganized into the State Political Administration.

COM-SO-MOL—League of Communist Youth.

COM-SO-MOLETZ—A member of the League of Communist Youth.

DYET-DOM—Children's Home.

FAB-COM—Factory Shop Committee; the basic unit of a Trade Union.

GUB—Abbreviation of Gubispolcom.

GUB-CHEKA—Provincial branch of the Cheka.

GUB-ISPOL-COM—Executive Committee of the Provincial Soviet Administration.

GUB-NAR-OBRAZ
GUB-ONO } Provincial Department of People's Education.

HOPAK—An Ukrainian folk-dance.

ILYICH—Lenin's patronymic. The affectionate form of reference by his followers.

ISPOL-COM—Executive Committee. In case of local Soviets—the Administration.

IZVESTIA—A Moscow newspaper. The official organ of the Soviet Government.

KASHA—A porridge made of grits.

KERENKA—Paper money issued by the Kerensky government.

KHODYNKA—A field outside of Moscow where, at the coronation ceremonies in 1894, hundreds of people were killed or injured in the crush.

KULT-AGIT-PROSVET—Department of Education and Agitation.

KVASS—A mild, fermented drink, similar to cider.

M. C.—Moscow Committee of the Communist Party.

NACH-PUR—Chief of the Department of Political Education in the Red Army.

NAR-COM-PROS—People's Commissariat of Education.

NAR-OBRAZ—Local Department of People's Education.

ORT-CHEKA—District Cheka.

POOD—36.11 pounds.

POLIT-BUREAU—The Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

POLIT-OTDYEL—Political Department.
POLIT-PROSVET—Department of Political Education.
POPADYA—A priest's wife.
PRAVDA—A Moscow newspaper. The official organ of the Communist Party.
R. C. S. M.—The Russian League of Communist Youth.
R. S. F. S. R.—Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic. Now part of the Soviet Union.
R. C. P.—Russian Communist Party.
REV-COM—Revolutionary Committee. A provisional administration established during the Revolutionary period in various localities, until a stable Soviet government was formed.
RTU-CHEKA—County Cheka.
RAI-COM—Ward Committee of the Communist Party.
SMOLNY—Smolny Institute. Formerly a school for young women of the nobility in Petrograd. Used by the Bolsheviks as headquarters during the Revolution.
SOV-KHOZ—An estate owned and operated by a branch of the Government.
SOV-NAR-COM—The Council of People's Commissars; the Cabinet.
TZIC—The Central Executive Committee of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.
VERST—0.66 mile.
ZDRAV-OTDYEL—Local Department of Health.

THE END

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